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NO. VII.

ON  
THE TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN  
RELIGION.

BY  
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A NEW EDITION, WITH ADDITIONS.



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OF THE  
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**T**o believe the christian religion is to believe that Moses and the prophets, Christ and his apostles, were endued with divine authority, that they had a commission from God to act and teach as they did, and that he will verify their declarations concerning future things, and especially those concerning a future life, by the event ; or, in other words, it is to receive the scriptures as our rule of life, and the foundation of all our hopes and fears. And as all those who regulate their faith and practice by the scriptures are christians, so all those who disclaim that name, and pass under the general title of unbelievers, do also disavow this regard to the scriptures. But there are various classes of unbelievers. Some appear to treat the scrip-

tures as mere forgeries & others allow them to be the genuine writings of those whose names they bear, but suppose them to abound with fictions, not only in the miraculous, but also in the common part of the history ; others again, allow this part, but reject that ; and, lastly, there are others who seem to allow the truth of the principal facts, both common and miraculous, contained in the scriptures, and yet still call in question its divine authority, as a rule of life and an evidence of a happy futurity under Christ our saviour and king. He, therefore, that would satisfy himself or others in the truth of the christian religion, as opposed by these several classes of unbelievers, must inquire into these three things.

First, The genuineness of the books of the Old and New Testaments.

Secondly, The truth of the principal facts contained in them, both common and miraculous. And,

Thirdly, Their divine authority.

I will endeavour, therefore, to state some of the chief evidences for each of these important points, having first premised three preparatory propositions, or lemmas, whereby the evidence for any one of them may be transferred upon the other two.

THE GENUINENESS OF THE SCRIPTURES PROVES THE  
TRUTH OF THE PRINCIPAL FACTS CONTAINED IN  
THEM.

FOR, First, It is very rare to meet with any genuine writings of the historical kind, in which the principal facts are not true ; unless where both the motives which engaged the author to falsify, and the circumstances which gave some plausibility to the fiction, are apparent ; neither of which can be alleged in the present case with any colour of reason. Where the writer of a history appears to the world as such, not only his moral sense, but his regard to his character and his interest, are strong motives not to falsify in notorious matters ; he must therefore have stronger motives from the opposite quarter, and also a favourable conjuncture of circumstances, before he can attempt this.

Secondly, As this is rare in general, so it is much more rare, where the writer treats of things that happened in his own time, and under his own cognizance or direction, and communicates his history to persons under the same circumstances. All which may be said of the writers of the scripture history.

That this, and the following arguments, may be applied with more ease and clearness, I will here, in one view, refer the books of the Old and New Testaments to their proper authors. I suppose then, that the Pentateuch consists of the writings of Moses, put together by Samuel,



with a very few additions ; that the books of Joshua and Judges were, in like manner, collected by him ; and the book of Ruth, with the first part of the first book of Samuel, written by him ; and that the latter part of the first book of Samuel, and the second book, were written by the prophets who succeeded Samuel, suppose Nathan and Gad ; that the books of Kings and Chronicles are extracts from the records of the succeeding prophets concerning their own times, and from the publick genealogical tables, made by Ezra ; that the books of Ezra and Nehemiah were collections of like records, some written by Ezra and Nehemiah, and some by their predecessors ; that the book of Esther was written by some eminent Jew, in or near the times of the transactions there recorded, perhaps Mordecai ; the book of Job by a Jew of an uncertain time ; the Psalms by David, and other pious persons ; the books of Proverbs and Canticles by Solomon ; the book of Ecclesiastes by Solomon, or perhaps by a Jew of later times, speaking in his person, but not with an intention to make him pass for the author ; the prophecies, by the prophets whose names they bear ; and the books of the New Testament by the persons to whom they are usually ascribed. There are many internal evidences, and in the case of the New Testament many external evidences also, by which these books may be shewn to belong to the authors here named. Or, if there be any doubts, they



are merely of a critical nature, and do not at all affect the genuineness of the books, nor alter the application of these arguments, or not materially. Thus, if the Epistle to the Hebrews be supposed written, not by St. Saul, but by Clement or Barnabas, or any other of their cotemporaries, the evidence therein given to the miracles performed by Christ, and his followers, will not be at all invalidated thereby.

Thirdly, The great importance of the facts mentioned in the scriptures makes it still more improbable, that the several authors should either have attempted to falsify, or have succeeded in such an attempt. This is an argument for the truth of the facts, which proves the genuineness of the books at the same time, as I shall shew below in a distinct proposition. However, the truth of the fact is inferred more directly from their importance, if the genuineness of the scriptures be previously allowed. The same thing may be observed of the great number of particular circumstances of time, place, persons, &c. mentioned in the scriptures, and of the harmony of the books with themselves, and with each other. These are arguments both for the genuineness of the books, and truth of the facts distinctly considered, and also arguments for deducing the truth from the genuineness. And indeed the arguments for the general truth of the history of any age or nation, where regular records have been kept, are so interwoven together, and support each other in

such a variety of ways, that it is extremely difficult to keep the ideas of them distinct, not to anticipate, and not to prove more than the exactness of method requires one to prove. Or, in other words, the inconsistency of the contrary suppositions is so great, that they can scarce stand long enough to be confuted. Let any one try this in the history of France, or England, Greece or Rome.

Fourthly, If the books of the Old and New Testaments were written by the persons to whom they were ascribed above, *i. e.* if they be genuine, the moral characters of these writers afford the strongest assurance, that the facts asserted by them are true. Falsehoods and frauds of a common nature shock the moral sense of common men, and are rarely met with, except in persons of abandoned characters: how inconsistent then must those of the most glaring and impious nature be with the highest moral characters! That such characters are due to the sacred writers appears from the writings themselves by an internal evidence; but there is also strong external evidence in many cases: and indeed this point is allowed in general by unbelievers. The sufferings which several of the writers underwent both in life and death, in attestation of the facts delivered by them, is a particular argument in favour of these.

Fifthly, The arguments here alleged for proving the truth of the scripture history from

the genuineness of the books, are as conclusive in respect of the miraculous facts, as of the common ones. But besides this we may observe, that if we allow the genuineness of the books to be a sufficient evidence of the common facts mentioned in them, the miraculous facts must be allowed also from their close connection with the common ones. It is necessary to admit both or neither. It is not to be conceived, that Moses should have delivered the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt, or conducted them through the wilderness for forty years, at all, in such manner as the common history represents, unless we suppose the miraculous facts intermixed with it to be true also. In like manner, the fame of Christ's miracles, the multitudes which followed him, the adherence of his disciples, the jealousy and hatred of the chief priests, scribes and pharisees, with many other facts of a common nature, are impossible to be accounted for, unless we allow that he did really work miracles. And the same observations hold in general of the other parts of the scripture history.

Sixthly, There is even a particular argument in favour of the miraculous part of the scripture history, to be drawn from the reluctance of mankind to receive miraculous facts. It is true, that this reluctance is greater in some ages and nations than in others; and probable reasons may be assigned why this reluctance was, in general, less in ancient times than in the



present, (which, however, are presumptions that some real miracles were then wrought); but it must always be considered from the very frame of the human mind, and would be particularly so amongst the Jews at the time of Christ's appearance, as they had then been without miracles for four hundred years, or more. Now this reluctance must make both the writers and readers very much upon their guard; and if it were now one of the chief prejudices against revealed religion, as unbelievers unanimously assert, it is but reasonable to allow also, that it would be a strong check upon the publication of a miraculous history at or near the time when the miracles were said to be performed, *i. e.* it will be a strong confirmation of such an history, if its genuineness be granted previously.

And, upon the whole, we may certainly conclude, that the principal facts, both common and miraculous, mentioned in the scriptures, must be true, if their genuineness be allowed. The objection against all miraculous facts will be considered below, after the other arguments of the truth of the scripture miracles have been alleged.

The converse of this proposition is also true, *i. e.* if the principal facts mentioned in the scriptures be true, they must be genuine writings. And though this converse proposition may, at first sight, appear to be of little importance for the establishment of christianity, inasmuch as



the genuineness of the scriptures is only made use of as a medium whereby to prove the truth of the facts mentioned in them, yet it will be found otherwise upon further examination. For there are many evidences for the truth of particular facts mentioned in the scriptures, such, for instance, as those taken from natural history, and the cotemporary profane history, which no ways presuppose, but, on the contrary, prove the genuineness of the scriptures; and this genuineness, thus proved, may, by the arguments alleged under this proposition, be extended to infer the truth of the rest of the facts. Which is not to argue in a circle, and to prove the truth of the scripture history from its truth; but to prove the truth of those facts, which are not attested by natural or civil history, from those which are, by the medium of the genuineness of the scriptures.

THE GENUINENESS OF THE SCRIPTURES PROVES  
THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY.

THE truth of this proposition, as it respects the book of Daniel, seems to have been acknowledged by Porphyry, inasmuch as he could no ways invalidate the divine authority of this book, implied by the accomplishment of the prophecies therein delivered, but by asserting, that they were written after the event, i. e. were forgeries. But the same thing holds of many of the other books of the Old and New Testa-

ments, many of them having unquestionable evidences of the divine foreknowledge, if they be allowed genuine. I reserve the prophetic evidences to be discussed hereafter, and therefore shall only suggest the following instances here, in order to illustrate the proposition, viz. Moses's prophecy concerning the captivity of the Israelites, of a state not yet erected; Isaiah's concerning Cyrus; Jeremiah's concerning the duration of the Babylonish captivity; Christ's concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, and the captivity that was to follow; St. John's concerning the great corruption of the christian church; and Daniel's concerning the fourth empire in its declension; which last was extant in Porphyry's time at least, *i. e.* before the events which it so fitly represents.

The same thing follows from the sublimity and excellence of the doctrines contained in the scriptures. These no ways suit the supposed authors, *i. e.* the ages when they lived, their educations or occupations; and therefore, if they were the real authors, there is a necessity of admitting the divine assistance.

The converse of this proposition, viz. that the divine authority of the scriptures infers their genuineness, will, I suppose, be readily acknowledged by all. And it may be used for the same purposes as the converse of the last. For there are several evidences for the divine authority of the scriptures, which are direct and immediate, and prior to the consideration both

of their genuineness, and of the truth of the facts contained in them. Of this kind is the character of Christ, as it may be collected from his discourses and actions related in the gospels. The great and manifest superiority of this to all other characters, real and fictitious, proves, at once, his divine mission, exclusively of all other considerations. Suppose now the genuineness of St. Luke's gospel to be deduced in this way, the genuineness of the Acts of the apostles may be deduced from it, and of St. Paul's epistles from the Acts, by the usual critical methods. And when the genuineness of the Acts of the Apostles, and of St. Paul's epistles, is thus deduced, the truth of the facts mentioned in them will follow from it by the last proposition ; and their divine authority by this.

THE TRUTH OF THE PRINCIPAL FACTS CONTAINED  
IN THE SCRIPTURES PROVES THEIR DIVINE AU-  
THORITY.

THIS proposition may be proved two ways ; first, exclusively of the evidences of natural religion, such as those delivered in the last chapter ; and secondly, from the previous establishment of the great truths of natural religion. And, first,

It is evident, that the great power, knowledge, and benevolence, which appeared in Christ, the prophets and apostles, according to the scripture



accounts, do, as it were, command assent and submission from all those who receive these accounts as historical truths ; and that, though they are not able to deduce, or have not, in fact, deduced the evidences of natural religion ; nay, though they should have many doubts about them, the frame of the human mind is such, that the scripture history, allowed to be true, must convince us, that Christ, the prophets and apostles, were endued with a power greater than human, and acted by the authority of a being of the highest wisdom and goodness.

Secondly, If natural religion be previously established, the truth of the principal facts of the scriptures proves their divine authority, in an easier and more convincing manner.

For, first, The power shewn in the miracles wrought by Christ, the prophets and apostles, the knowledge in their prophecies, and their good moral characters, shew them to be, in an eminent manner the children, servants, and messengers, of him, who is now previously acknowledged to be infinite in power, knowledge, and goodness.

Secondly, Christ, the prophets and apostles, make an express claim to a divine mission. Now, it cannot be reconciled to God's moral attributes of justice, veracity, mercy, &c. that he should permit these persons to make such a claim falsely, and then endue them, or suffer them to be endued, with such credentials ; as must support such a false claim. Their claim



is not, therefore, a false one, if we admit their credentials ; or, in other words, the truth of the principal facts mentioned in the scriptures proves the divine mission of Christ, the prophets, and apostles, i. e. the divine authority of the scriptures.

The same observations may be made upon the converse of this proposition, as upon those of the two last.

And thus the genuineness of the scriptures, the truth of the principal facts contained in them, and their divine authority, appear to be so connected with each other, that any one being established upon independent principles, the other two may be inferred from it. The first and second of these points are, indeed, more evidently subservient to the last, than the last is to them ; for, if the last be allowed, it is at once all that the believer contends for : whereas some persons appear to admit, or not to reject, the first, or even the second, and yet are ranked under the title of unbelievers. It is necessary to shew to such persons, that the first and second infer each other mutually, and both of them the last ; and it may be of some use to shew, that the last infers the two first in such a way, as to cast some light upon itself, without arguing in a circle ; the divine authority of one book being made to infer the genuineness of another, or the facts contained in it, i. e. its divine authority also.

Here it may not be amiss to say something

concerning the divine inspiration of the scriptures. Now there are three different suppositions, which may be made concerning this point.

The first and lowest is, that all the passages delivered by Moses and the prophets, as coming from God, and by the evangelists, as the words of Christ, also the revelation given to St. John in a divine vision, with all parallel portions of scripture, must be considered as divinely inspired, and as having immediate divine authority, else we cannot allow even common authority to these books ; but that the common history, the reasonings of the apostles from the Old Testament, and perhaps some of their opinions, may be considered as coming merely from themselves, and therefore, though highly to be regarded, are not of unquestionable authority. The arguments for this hypothesis may be, that since the scriptures have suffered by transcribers, like other books, a perfect exactness in the original, as to minute particulars, (in which alone it has suffered, or could suffer, from transcribers) is needless ; that Moses and the prophets, the evangelists and apostles, had natural talents for writing history, applying the scriptures, reasoning, and delivering their opinions ; and that God works by natural means, where there are such ; that the apostles were ignorant of the true extent of Christ's kingdom for a considerable time after his resurrection, and perhaps mistaken about his second coming ;

that God might intend, that nothing in this world should be perfect, our blessed lord excepted ; that some historical facts seem difficult to be reconciled to one another, and some applications of passages from the Old Testament by the writers of the New, with their reasonings thereupon, inconclusive and unsatisfactory ; that the writers themselves no where lay claim to infallibility, when speaking from themselves ; and that Hermas, Clemens Romanus, and Barnabas, who were apostolick persons, seem evidently to have reasoned in an inconclusive manner.

The second hypothesis is, that historical incidents of small moment, with matters of a nature foreign to religion, may indeed not have divine authority ; but that all the rest of the scriptures, the reasonings, the application of the prophecies, and even the doctrines of inferiour note, must be inspired ; else what can be meant of the spirit, particularly that of prophecy, *i. e.* of instructing others ? How can Christ's promise of the comforter, who should lead his disciples into all truth, be fulfilled ? Will not the very essentials of religion, the divine mission of Christ, providence, and a future state, be weakened by thus supposing the sacred writers to be mistaken in religious points ? And though the history and the reasonings of the scriptures have the marks of being written in the same manner as other books, *i. e.* may seem not to be inspired, yet a secret influence might conduct the



writers in every thing of moment, even when they did not perceive it, or reflect upon it themselves ; it being evident, from obvious reasonings, as well as from the foregoing theory, that the natural workings of the mind are not to be distinguished from those, which a being that has sufficient power over our intellectual frame might excite in us.

The third and last hypothesis is, that the whole scriptures are inspired, even the most minute historical passages, the salutations, incidental mention of common affairs, &c. The arguments in favour of this hypothesis are, that many parts of scripture appear to have double, or perhaps manifold senses ; that not one jot or tittle of the law (*i. e.* of the whole scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments, in an enlarged way of interpretation, which however seems justifiable by parallel instances) shall perish ; that the Bible, *i. e.* the book of books, as we now have it, appears to have been remarkably distinguished by Providence from all other writings, even of good Jews and Christians, and to admit of a vindication in respect of small difficulties, and small seeming inconsistencies, as well as of great ones, every day more and more as we advance in knowlege and that effects of the same kind with divine inspiration, viz. the working of miracles, and the gift of prophecy, subsisted during the times of the authors of the books of the Old and New Testaments, and even in all, or nearly all, of these writers ;



also that they extended, in some cases, to very minute things.

I will not presume to determine which of these three suppositions approaches nearest to the truth. The following propositions will, I hope, establish the first of them at least, and prove the genuineness of the scriptures, the truth of these facts contained in them, and their divine authority, to such a degree, as that we need not fear to make them the rules of our lives, and the ground of our future expectations; which is all that is absolutely necessary for the proof of the christian religion, and the satisfaction and comfort of religious persons. I even believe, that the following evidences favour the second hypothesis strongly, and exclude all errors and imperfections of note; nay, I am inclined to believe, that serious, inquisitive men can scarce rest there, but will be led by the successive clearing of difficulties, and unfolding the most wonderful truths, to believe the whole scriptures to be inspired, and to abound with numberless uses and applications, of which we yet know nothing. Let future ages determine. The evidently miraculous nature of one part, viz. the prophetical, disposes the mind to believe the whole to be far above human invention, or even penetration, till such time as our understandings shall be farther opened by the events which are to precede the second coming of Christ. In the mean while, let criticks and learned men of all kinds have full liberty to ex-

amine the sacred books ; and let us be sparing in our censures of each other. ' Let us judge nothing before the time, until the lord come ; and then shall every man have praise of God.' Sobriety of mind, humility, and piety, are requisite in the pursuit of knowledge of every kind, and much more in that of sacred. I have here endeavoured to be impartial to each hypothesis, and just to hint what I apprehended each party would or might say in defence of their own. However, 'they are all brethren,' and ought not to 'fall out by the way.'

**THE MANNER IN WHICH THE BOOKS OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS HAVE BEEN HANDED DOWN FROM AGE TO AGE, PROVES BOTH THEIR GENUINENESS, AND THE TRUTH OF THE PRINCIPAL FACTS CONTAINED IN THEM.**

For, first, It resembles the manner in which all other genuine books and true histories have been conveyed down to posterity. As the writings of the Greek and Roman poets, orators, philosophers and historians, were esteemed by these nations to be transmitted to them by their forefathers in a continued succession, from the times when the respective authors lived, so have the books of the Old Testament by the Jewish nation, and those of the New by the Christians ; and it is an additional evidence in the last case, that the primitive christians were not a distinct nation, but a great multitude of people dispersed through all the nations of the Roman empire,

and even extending itself beyond the bounds of that empire. As the Greeks and Romans always believed the principal facts of their historical books, so the Jews and Christians did more, and never seem to have doubted of the truth of any part of theirs. In short, whatever can be said of the traditional authority due to the Greek and Roman writers, something analogous to this, and for the most part of greater weight, may be urged for the Jewish and Christian. Now, I suppose that all sober-minded men admit the books usually ascribed to the Greek and Roman historians, philosophers, &c. to be genuine, and the principal facts related or alluded to in them to be true, and that one chief evidence for this is the general traditionary one here recited. They ought therefore to pay the same regard to the books of the Old and New Testaments, since there are the same or greater reasons for it.

Secondly, If we reconsider the circumstance recited in the last paragraph, it will appear, that these traditionary evidences are sufficient ones ; and we shall have a real argument, as well as one *ad hominem*, for receiving books so handed down to us. For it is not to be conceived, that whole nations should either be imposed upon themselves, or concur to deceive others, by forgeries of books or facts. These books and facts must therefore, in general, be genuine and true ; and it is a strong additional evidence of this, that all nations must be jealous of forgeries, for the same reasons that we are.



Here it may be objected, that as we reject the prodigies related by the Greek and Roman writers, though we admit the common history, so we ought also to reject the scripture miracles. To this I answer,

First, That the scripture history is supported by far stronger evidences than the Greek or Roman, as will appear in the following propositions.

Secondly, That many of the scripture miracles are related by eye-witnesses, and were of a publick nature, of long duration, attended by great and lasting effects, inseparably connected with the common history, and evidently suitable to our notions of a wise and good Providence, which cannot be said of those related by the Pagan writers.

Thirdly, That the scripture miracles not attended by these cogent circumstances are supported by their connection with such as are ; and that after we have admitted these, there remains no longer any presumption against those from their miraculous nature.

Fourthly, If there be any small number found amongst the Pagan miracles, attested by such like evidences as the principal ones for the scripture miracles, I do not see how they can be rejected ; but it will not follow, that the scripture miracles are false, because some of the Pagan ones are true.

THE GREAT IMPORTANCE OF THE HISTORIES, PRECEPTS, PROMISES, THREATENINGS, AND PROPHECIES CONTAINED IN THE SCRIPTURES, ARE EVIDENCES BOTH OF THEIR GENUINENESS, AND OF THE PRINCIPAL FACTS MENTIONED IN THEM.

THIS is one of the instances in which the evidences for the scriptures are superiour, beyond comparison, to those for any other ancient books. Let us take a short review of this importance in its several particulars.

The history of the creation, fall, deluge, longevity of the patriarchs, dispersion of mankind, calling of Abraham, descent of Jacob with his family into Egypt, and the precepts of abstaining from blood, and of circumcision, were of so much concern, either to mankind in general, or to the Israelites in particular, and some of them of so extraordinary a nature, as that it could not be an indifferent matter to the people amongst whom the account given of them in Genesis was first published, whether they received them or not. Suppose this account to be first published, amongst the Israelites by Moses, and also to be then confirmed by clear, universal, uninterrupted tradition (which is possible and probable, according to the history itself), and it will be easy to conceive, upon this true supposition, how this account should be handed down from age to age amongst the Jews, and received by them as indubitable. Suppose this account

to be false, *i. e.* suppose that there were no such evidences and vestiges of these histories and precepts, and it will be difficult to conceive how this could have happened, let the time of publication be as it will. If early, the people would reject the account at once for want of a clear tradition, which the account itself would give them reason to expect. If late, it would be natural to inquire how the author came to be informed of things never known before to others.

If it be said, that he delivered them as communicated to him by revelation (which yet cannot well be said on account of the many references in Genesis to the remaining vestiges of the things related), these surprizing, interesting particulars would at least be an embarrassment upon his fictitious credentials, and engage his contemporaries to look narrowly into them.

If it be said, that there were many cosmogonies and theogonies current amongst the Pagans, yet are evidently fictions ; I answer, that these were, in general, regarded only as amusing fictions ; however that they had some truths in them, either expressed in plain words, or concealed in figures ; and that their agreement with the book of Genesis, as far as they are consistent with one another, or have any appearance of truth, is a remarkable evidence in favour of this book. It is endless to make all the possible suppositions and objections of this kind ; but it appears to me, that the more are made, the more



will the truth and genuineness of the scriptures be established thereby.

It ought to be added, in relation to the precepts of abstaining from blood, and circumcision, beforementioned, that if the first was common to mankind, or was known to have been so, the last peculiar to the descendants of Abraham, at the time of the publication of the book of Genesis, this confirms it ; if otherwise, would contribute to make it rejected. If neither the practices themselves, nor any vestiges of them, subsisted at all, the book must be rejected. The difficulty of deducing these practices from the principles of human nature ought to be considered here ; as it tends to prove their divine original, agreeably to the accounts given of them in Genesis.

Let us next come to the law of Moses. This was extremely burthensome, expensive, severe, particularly upon the crime of idolatry, to which all mankind were then extravagantly prone, and absurd, according to the common judgment of mankind, in the instances of forbidding to provide themselves with horses for war, and commanding all the males of the whole nation to appear at Jerusalem three times in a year. At the same time, it claims a divine authority every where, and appeals to facts of the most notorious kind, and to customs and ceremonies of the most peculiar nature, as the memorials of these facts. We cannot conceive, then, that any nation, with such motives to reject, and such op-

portunities of detecting, the forgery of the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, should yet receive them, and submit to this heavy yoke. That they should often throw it off in part, and for a time, and rebel against the divine authority of their law, though sufficiently evidenced, is easily to be accounted for from what we see and feel in ourselves and others every day ; but that they should ever return and repent, ever submit to it, unless it had divine authority, is utterly incredible. It was not a matter of such small importance, as that they could content themselves with a superficial examination, with a less examination than would be sufficient to detect so notorious a forgery ; and this holds, at whatever time we suppose these books to be published.

That the Jews did thus submit to the law of Moses, is evident from the books of the Old and New Testaments, if we allow them the least truth and genuineness, or even from profane writers ; nay, I may say, from the present observance of it by the Jews scattered through all the kingdoms of the world.

If it be said, that other nations have ascribed divine authority to their lawgivers, and submitted to very severe laws ; I answer, first, That the pretences of lawgivers amongst the pagans to inspiration, and the submission of the people to them, may be accounted for in the degree in which they are found, from the circumstances of things, without having recourse to real inspi-

ration ; and particularly, that if we admit the patriarchal revelations related and intimated by Moses, and his own divine legation, it will appear that the heathen lawgivers copied after these ; which is a strong argument for admitting them. Secondly, That there is no instance among the pagans, of a body of laws being produced at once, and remaining without addition afterwards ; but that they were compiled by degrees, according to the exigences of the state, the prevalence of a particular faction, or the authority of some particular persons, who were styled lawgivers, as Draco and Solon at Athens : that they were made, in general, not to curb, but humour, the genius of the people ; and were afterwards repealed and altered from the same causes ; whereas the body politick of the Israelites took upon itself a complete form at once, and has preserved this form in great measure to the present time, and that under the highest external disadvantages ; which is an instance quite without parallel, and shews the great opinion which they had of their law, *i.e.* its great importance to them.

If it is said, that the laws of the Israelites were not perhaps imposed at once, but grew up by degrees, as in other nations, this will make the difficulty of receiving the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, in which the contrary, with all the particular circumstances, is asserted, greater than ever. In short, of all the fictions or forgeries that can



happen amongst any people, the most improbable is that of their body of civil laws ; and it seems to be utterly impossible in the case of the law of Moses.

The next part of the scriptures, whose importance we are to consider, is the history contained in the books of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, and extending from the death of Moses to the re-establishment of the Jews after the Babylonish captivity, by Ezra and Nehemiah. Now in this history are the following important facts, most of which must be supposed to leave such vestiges of themselves, either external visible ones, or internal in the minds and memories of the people, as would verify them, if true ; make them be rejected, if false. The conquest of the land of Canaan, the division of it, and the appointment of cities for the priests and levites by Joshua ; the frequent slaveries of the Israelites to the neighbouring kings, and their deliverance by the Judges ; the erection of a kingdom by Samuel ; the translation of this kingdom from Saul's family to David, with his conquests ; the glory of Solomon's kingdom ; the building of the temple ; the division of the kingdom ; the idolatrous worship set up at Dan and Bethel ; the captivity of the Israelites by the kings of Assyria ; the captivity of the Jews by Nebuchadnezzar ; the destruction of their temple ; their return under Cyrus, rebuilding the temple under Darius Hystaspes, and re-establishment un-

der Artaxerxes Longimanus, by Ezra and Nehemiah ; these events are some of them the most shameful that can well happen to any people. How can we reconcile forgeries of such opposite kinds, and especially as they are interwoven together ? But, indeed, the facts are of such consequence, notoriety, and permanency in their effects, that neither could any particular person amongst the Israelites first project the design of feigning them, nor their own people concur with such a design, nor the neighbouring nations permit the fiction to pass. Nothing could make a jealous multitude amongst the Israelites or neighbouring nations acquiesce, but the invincible evidence of the facts here alleged. And the same observations hold of numberless other facts of lesser note, which it would be tedious to recount ; and of miraculous facts as much, or rather more than others. Besides which, it is to be noted, that all these have such various necessary connections with each other, that they cannot be separated, as has been already remarked.

And all this will, I presume, be readily acknowledged, upon supposition that the several books were published in or near the times of the facts therein recorded. But say the objectors, this will not hold in these times. Let us take an extreme case then, and suppose all these historical books forged by Ezra. But this is evidently impossible. Things of so important and notorious a kind, so glorious and so shame-

ful to the people, for whose sake they were forged, would have been rejected with the utmost indignation, unless there were the strongest and most genuine footsteps of these things already amongst the people. They were therefore in part true. But many additions were made by Ezra, say the objectors. I answer, if these were of importance, the difficulty returns. If not, then all the important facts are true. Besides, what motive could any one have for making additions, of no importance; Again, if there were any ancient writings extant, Ezra must either copy after them, which destroys the present supposition; or differ from and oppose them, which would betray him. If there were no such writings, the people could not but inquire in matters of importance, for what reasons Ezra was so particular in things of which there was neither any memory, nor account in writing. If it be said, that the people did not regard what Ezra had thus forged, but let it pass uncontradicted; this is again to make the things of small or no importance. Besides, why should Ezra write, if no one would read or regard? Farther, Ezra must, like all other men, have friends, enemies, and rivals; and some or all of these would have been a check upon him, and a security against him in matters of importance.

If, instead of supposing Ezra to have forged all these books at once, we suppose them forged successively, one, two, or three centuries after the facts related; we shall, from this inter-



mediate supposition, have (besides the difficulty of accounting for such a regular succession of impostures in matters so important) a mixture of the difficulties recited in the two preceding paragraphs, the sum total of which will be the same, or nearly the same, as in either of those cases. And, upon the whole, the forgery of the annals of the Israelites appears to be impossible, as well as that of the body of their civil laws.

If it is said, that the histories and annals of other nations have many fictions and falsehoods in them? I answer, that the superiour importance of the events which happened to the Jewish nation, and the miraculous nature of many of them, occasioned their being recorded at the then present times, in the way of simple narration, the command of God also concurring, as it seems; and that thus all addition, variety, and embellishment, was prevented: whereas the histories of the originals of other nations were not committed to writing till long after the events, after they had been corrupted and obscured by numberless fables and fictions, as is well known. There are many other circumstances peculiar to the Jewish history, which establish its truth even in the minutest things as I shall shew in the following propositions; and I hope the reader will see, in the progress of the argument, that the same method of reasoning which proves the Jewish history to be rigorously exact, proves also, that the histories of other nations may be expected to be partly true, and

partly false, as they are agreed to be by all learned and sober-minded men.

I pass over the books of Esther, Job, the Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Canticles, as not having much relation to this proposition; and proceed to the consideration of the Prophecies.

These contain the most important precepts, promises, threatenings, and predictions, *i. e.* prophecies peculiarly so called, besides the indirect and incidental mention of the great events recorded in the historical books. And as they are full of the severest reproofs and denunciations against all ranks, king, governours and great men subordinate to him, priests, prophets, and people, one cannot expect, that they should be favourably received by any, but those of the best moral characters: and these must be the first to detect and expose a forgery, if there was any. So that the prophecies, if they were forgeries, could not be able to stand so rigorous an examination as the importance of the case would prompt all ranks to. And here all the arguments before used to shew, that the historical books could neither be forged at the time of the facts, nor so late as Ezra's time, nor in any intermediate one, are applicable with the same or even greater force. Besides which, it is to be observed of the predictions in particular, that, if they were published before the events, they could not be forgeries; if afterwards there would not be wanting amongst the Jews many persons

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of the same disposition with Porphyry, and the present objectors to the genuineness of the prophecies, and the truth of the facts related or implied in them, who upon that supposition would have met with success, as Porphyry, and the ancient objectors would have done long ago, had their objections been solid. Infidelity is the natural and necessary product of human wickedness and weakness ; we see it, in all other things, as well as in religion, whensoever the interests and passions of men are opposite to truth ; and the present objectors to the truth of revealed religion may be assured, that the ancient ones, the murmuring Israelites in the wilderness, the rebellious Jews before Christ, and both Jews and Gentiles since Christ, have done justice to their cause.

We come in the last place to consider the importance of the books of the Old and New Testament. Whoever then received these in ancient times as genuine and true, must not only forsake all sinful pleasures, but exposed himself to various hardships and dangers, and even to death itself. They had indeed a future glory promised to them, with which the sufferings of the present time were not worthy to be compared. But then this glory, being future, must be supported with the most incontestable evidences ; else it could have no power against the opposite motives ; and both together must so rouse the mind, as to make men exert themselves to the uttermost, till they had received



full satisfaction. Besides which, it is to be observed, that even joy, and the greatness of an expectation, incline men to disbelieve, and to examine with a scrupulous exactness, as well as fear and dislike.

As to those who did not receive the doctrines of the New Testament, and the facts there related and implied, they would have sufficient motives to detect the forgery or falsehood, had there been any such. They were all condemned for their unbelief; many for their gross vices; the Jew for his darling partiality to his own nation, and ceremonial law; and the Gentile, for his idolatry and polytheism; and the most dreadful punishments threatened to all in a future state. Now these were important charges, and alarming considerations, which, if they did not put men upon a fair examination, would, at least, make them desirous to find fault, to detect and expose, and, if they had discovered any fraud, to publish it with the utmost triumph. The books of the New Testament could not but be of so much importance to the unbelievers of the primitive times, as to excite them to vigilance and earnestness, in endeavouring to discredit and destroy them. All which is abundantly confirmed by the history of those times. And indeed cases of the same kind, though not of the same degree, occur now to daily observation, which the reader will do well to call to mind. Thus it comes to pass, on one hand, that frauds and impostures are crushed in the

birth ; and, on the other, that wicked men labour against the truth in the most unreasonable and inconsistent ways, and are led on from one degree of obstinacy, prevarication, and infatuation, to another, without limits.

It may be added here, that the persons reproved and condemned in the gospel, in the Acts of the apostles, by St. Paul in his epistles, by St. Peter in his second epistle, by St. John and St. Jude in their epistles, and by St. John in the Revelation, viz. the five churches and the Nicolaitants, could not but endeavour to vindicate themselves. The books were all of a publick nature, and these reproofs particularly so, as being intended to guard others.

I have now gone through the several parts of the scripture, and shewn briefly how the importance of each would be a security against forgery and fiction in that part. I will now add some general evidences to the same purpose.

First, then, It is certain, that both Jews and Christians have undergone the severest persecutions and sufferings on account of their sacred books, and yet never could be prevailed with to deliver them up ; which shews that they thought them of the highest importance, most genuine and true.

Secondly, The preservation of the law of Moses, which is probably the first book that was ever written in any language, while so many others more modern have been lost, shews the great regard paid to it. The same holds in

a less degree of most of the other books of the Old Testament, since most of them are antienter than the oldest Greek historians. And as the records of all the neighbouring nations are lost ; we must suppose those of the Jews to have been preserved, from their importance, or some other such cause, as may be an equal evidence of their genuineness and truth.

Thirdly, The great importance of all the sacred books appears from the many early translations and paraphrases of them. The same translations and paraphrases must be an effectual means of securing their integrity and purity, if we could suppose any design to corrupt them.

Fourthly, The hesitation and difficulty with which a few books of the New Testament were received into the canon, shew the great care and concern of the primitive christians about their canon, *i. e.* the high importance of the books received into it ; and are therefore a strong evidence, first for the genuineness and truth of the books which were received without hesitation ; and then for these others, since they were received universally at last.

Fifthly, The great religious hatred and animosity which subsisted between the Jews and Samaritans, and between several of the ancient sects amongst the christians, shew of what importance they all thought their sacred books ; and would make them watch over one another with a jealous eye.



THE LANGUAGE, STYLE, AND MANNER OF WRITING  
USED IN THE BOOKS OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS, ARE ARGUMENTS OF THEIR GENUINENESS.

HERE I observe, first, that the Hebrew language, in which the Old Testament was written, being the language of an ancient people, and one that had little intercourse with their neighbours, and whose neighbours also spake a language that had great affinity with their own, would not change so fast as modern languages have done, since nations have been variously mixed with one another, and trade, arts, and sciences, greatly extended. Yet some changes there must be in passing from the time of Moses to that of Malachi. Now, I apprehend, that the Biblical Hebrew corresponds to this criterion with so much exactness, that a considerable argument may be deduced thence in favour of the genuineness of the books of the Old Testament.

Secondly, The books of the Old Testament have too considerable a diversity of style to be the work either of one Jew (for a Jew he must be on account of the language), or of any set of cotemporary Jews. If therefore they be all forgeries, there must be a succession of impostors in different ages, who have concurred to impose upon posterity, which is inconceivable. To suppose part forged, and part genuine, is

very harsh, neither would this supposition, if admitted, be satisfactory.

Thirdly, The Hebrew language ceased to be spoken, as a living language, soon after the time of the Babylonish captivity : but it would be difficult or impossible to forge any thing in it, after it was become a dead language. For there was no grammar made for the Hebrew till many ages after ; and, as it is difficult to write in a dead language with exactness, even by the help of a grammar, so it seems impossible without it. All the books of the Old Testament must therefore be, nearly, as ancient as the Babylonish captivity : and, since they could not all be written in the same age, some must be considerably more ancient ; which would bring us again to a succession of conspiring impostors.

Fourthly, This last remark may perhaps afford a new argument for the genuineness of the book of Daniel, if any were wanting. But indeed the Septuagint translation shews both this, and all the other books of the Old Testament to have been considered as ancient books, soon after the times of Antiochus Epiphanes, at least.

Fifthly, There is a simplicity of style, and an unaffected manner of writing, in all the books of the Old Testament ; which is a very strong evidence of their genuineness, even exclusively of the suitableness of this circumstance to the times of the supposed authors.

Sixthly, The style of the New Testament is also simple and unaffected, and perfectly suited to the time, place, and persons. Let it be observed farther, that the use of words and phrases is such, also the ideas, and method of reasoning, as that the books of the New Testament could be written by none but persons originally Jews ; which would bring the inquiry into a little narrower compass, if there was any occasion for this.

One may also observe, that the narrations and precepts of both Old and New Testament are delivered without hesitation ; the writers teach as having authority ; which circumstance is peculiar to those, who have both a clear knowledge of what they deliver, and a perfect integrity of heart.

THE VERY GREAT NUMBER OF PARTICULAR CIRCUMSTANCES OF TIME, PLACE, PERSONS, &c. MENTIONED IN THE SCRIPTURES, ARE ARGUMENTS BOTH OF THEIR GENUINENESS AND TRUTH.

THAT the reader may understand what I mean by these particular circumstances, I will recite some of the principal heads, under which they may be classed.

There are then mentioned in the book of Genesis, the rivers of paradise, the generations of the antediluvian patriarchs, the deluge with its circumstances, the place where the ark rested, the building of the tower of Babel, the confu-



sion of tongues, the dispersion of mankind, or the division of the earth amongst the posterity of Shem, Ham, and Japhet, the generations of the postdiluvian patriarchs, with the gradual shortening of human life after the flood, the sojournings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with many particulars of the state of Canaan, and the neighbouring countries in their times, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the state of the land of Edom, both before and after Esau's time, and the descent of Jacob into Egypt, with the state of Egypt before Moses's time.

In the book of Exodus are the plagues of Egypt, the institution of the passover, the passage through the Red Sea, with the destruction of Pharaoh and his host there, the miracles of manna, the victory over the Amalekites, the solemn delivery of the law from mount Sinai, many particular laws both solemn and ceremonial, the worship of the golden calf, and a very minute description of the tabernacle, priests' garments, ark, &c.

In Leviticus we have a collection of ceremonial laws, with all their particularities, and an account of the deaths of Nadab and Abihu.

The book of Numbers contains the first and second numberings of the several tribes with their genealogies, the peculiar offices of the three several families of the Levites, many ceremonial laws, the journeyings and encampments of the people in the wilderness during forty years, with

the relation of some remarkable events which happened in this period ; as the searching of the land, the rebellion of Korah, the victories over Arad, Sion, and Og, with the division of the kingdoms of the two last among the Gadites, Reubenites, and Manassites, the history of Balak and Balaam, and the victory over the Midianites, all described with the several particularities of time, place, and persons.

The book of Deuteronomy contains a recapitulation of many things contained in the three last books, with a second delivery of the law, chiefly the moral one, by Moses, upon the borders of Canaan, just before his death, with an account of this.

In the book of Joshua, we have the passage over Jordan, the conquest of the land of Canaan in detail, and the division of it among the tribes, including a minute geographical description.

The book of Judges recites a great variety of publick transactions, with the private origin of some. In all, the names of times, places, and persons, both among the Israelites, and the neighbouring nations, are noted with particularity and simplicity.

In the book of Ruth is a very particular account of the genealogy of David, with several incidental circumstances.

The books of Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, contain the transactions of the kings before the captivity, and governours

afterwards, all delivered in the same circumstantial manner. And here the particular account of the regulations sacred and civil established by David, and of the building of the temple by Solomon, the genealogies given in the beginning of the first book of Chronicles, and the lists of the persons who returned, sealed, &c. after the captivity, in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, deserve especial notice, in the light in which we are now considering things.

The book of Esther contains a like account of a very remarkable event, with the institution of a festival in memory of it.

The book of Psalms mentions many historical facts in an incidental way ; and this, with the books of Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Canticles, allude to the manners and customs of ancient times in various ways.

In the prophecies there are some historical relations ; and in the other parts the indirect mention of facts, times, places, and persons, is interwoven with the predictions in the most copious and circumstantial manner.

If we come to the New Testament, the same observations present themselves at first view. We have the names of friends and enemies, Jews, Greeks, and Romans, obscure and illustrious, the times, places, and circumstances of facts, specified directly, and alluded to indirectly, with various references to the customs and manners of those times.



Now here I observe, First, That, in fact, we do not ever find, that forged or false accounts of things superabound thus in particularities. There is always some truth where there are considerable particularities related, and they always seem to bear some proportion to one another. Thus there is a great want of the particulars of time, place, and persons, in Manetho's account of the Egyptian dynasties, Ctesias's of the Assyrian kings, and those which the technical chronologers have given of the ancient kingdoms of Greece ; and, agreeably thereto, these accounts have much fiction and falsehood, with some truth : whereas Thucydides' history of the Peloponnesian war, and Cæsar's of the war in Gaul, in both which the particulars of time, place, and persons, are mentioned, are universally esteemed true to a great degree of exactness.

Secondly, A forger, or a relator of falsehoods, would be careful not to mention so great a number of particulars, since this would be to put into his reader's hands criterions whereby to detect him. Thus we may see one reason of the fact mentioned in the last paragraph, and which in confirming that fact, confirms the proposition here to be proved.

Thirdly, A forger, or a relator of falsehoods, could scarce furnish out such lists of particulars. It is easy to conceive how faithful records kept from time to time by persons concerned in the transactions should contain such lists ; nay, it is

natural to expect them in this case, from that local memory which takes strong possession of the fancy in those who have been present at transactions ; but it would be a work of the highest invention, and the greatest stretch of genius, to raise from nothing such numberless particularities, as are almost every where to be met with in the scriptures. The account given of memory, imagination, and invention, in the foregoing part of these observations, sets this matter in a strong light.

There is a circumstance relating to the gospels, which deserves particular notice in this place. St. Matthew and St. John were apostles ; and therefore, since they accompanied Christ, must have this local memory of his journeyings and miracles. St. Mark was a Jew of Judea, and a friend of St. Peter, and therefore may either have had this local memory himself, or have written chiefly from St. Peter, who had. But St. Luke being a proselyte of Antioch, not converted perhaps till several years after Christ's resurrection, and receiving his accounts from different eyewitnesses, as he says himself, could have no regard of that order of time, which a local memory would suggest. Let us see how the gospels answer to these positions. St. Matthew's then appears to be in exact order of time, and to be a regulator to St. Mark's, and St. Luke's, shewing St. Mark's to be nearly so, but St. Luke's to have little or no regard to the order of time in his account of

Christ's ministry. St. John's gospel is, like St. Matthew's, in order of time ; but as he wrote after all the rest and with a view only of recording some remarkable particulars, such as Christ's actions before he left Judea to go to preach in Galilee, his disputes with the Jews of Jerusalem, and his discourses to the apostles at his last supper, there was less opportunity for his local memory to shew itself. However, his recording what passed before Christ's going into Galilee might be in part from this cause, as St. Matthew's omission of it was probably from his want of this local memory. For it appears that St. Matthew resided in Galilee ; and that he was not converted till some time after Christ's coming thither to preach. Now this suitableness of the four gospels to their reputed authors, in a circumstance of so subtle and recluse a nature, is quite inconsistent with the supposition of fiction or forgery. This remark is chiefly taken from Sir Isaac Newton's chapter concerning the times of the birth and passion of Christ, in his comment on Daniel.

Fourthly, If we could suppose the persons who forged the books of the Old and New Testaments to have furnished their readers with the great variety of particulars above-mentioned, notwithstanding the two reasons here alleged against it, we cannot, however, conceive, but that the persons of those times when the books were published, must, by the help of these criterions, have detected and exposed the forgeries



or falsehoods. For these criterions are so attested by allowed facts, as at this time, and in this remote corner of the world, to establish the truth and genuineness of the scriptures, as may appear even from this chapter, and much more from the writings of commentators, sacred critics, and such other learned men, as have given the historical evidences for revealed religion in detail; and by parity of reason they would suffice even now to detect the fraud, were there any: whence we may conclude, *a fortiori*, that they must have enabled the persons who were upon the spot, when the books were published, to do this; and the importance of many of these particulars considered under the last head but one, would furnish them with abundant motives for this purpose. And upon the whole I infer, that the very great number of particulars of time, place, persons, &c. mentioned in the scriptures, is a proof of their genuineness and truth, even previously to the consideration of the agreement of these particulars with history, natural and civil, and with one another, of which I now proceed to treat.

THE AGREEMENT OF THE SCRIPTURES WITH HISTORY, NATURAL AND CIVIL, IS A PROOF OF THEIR GENUINENESS AND TRUTH.

THUS the history of the fall agrees in an eminent manner both with the obvious facts of labour, sorrow, pain, and death, with what we see and feel every day, and with all our philosophical inquiries into the frame of the human mind, the nature of social life, and the origin of evil, as may appear from these papers amongst other writings of the same kind. The several powers of the little world within a man's own breast are at variance with one another, as well as those of the great world : we are utterly unable to give a complete solution of the origin of the evils which flow from these discords, and from the jarring of the elements of the natural world ; and yet there are comfortable hopes, that all evil will be overpowered and annihilated at last, and that it has an entire subserviency to good really and ultimately, *i. e.* though the 'serpent bruise our heel,' yet we shall 'bruise its head.'

It cannot be denied indeed, but that both the history of the creation, and that of the fall, are attended with great difficulties. But then they are not of such a kind as intimate them to be a fiction contrived by Moses. It is probable, that he set down the traditional account, such as he received it from his ancestors ; and that

this account contains the literal truth in short, though so concealed in certain particulars through its shortness, and some figurative expressions made use of, that we cannot yet, perhaps never shall, interpret it satisfactorily. However, Mr. Whiston's conjectures concerning the six days' creation seem to deserve the attention of future inquirers ; and there is great plausibility in supposing with him, that the first chapter of Genesis contains a narrative of the succession of visible appearances.

One may suppose also, that there is a typical and prophetick sense to be discovered hereafter, relative perhaps to the six millenniums, which are to precede a seventh sabbatical one ; and that the words are more accommodated to this sense than to the literal one, in some places, which I think holds in many of the prophecies that have double senses. However, there is no appearance of any motive to a fraud, either in the history of the creation or fall, nor any mark of one. And the same shortness and obscurity which prevents our being able to explain, seems also to preclude objections. If we suppose these histories to have been delivered by traditional explanations that accompanied hieroglyphical delineations, this would perhaps account for some of the difficulties ; and help us to conceive how the histories may be exact, and even decypherable hereafter. The appellations of the tree of life, of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and of the serpent, seem to favour



this supposition. At the utmost, one can make no objections against these histories, but what are consistent with the first and lowest of the suppositions above-mentioned concerning divine inspiration.

Natural history bears a strong testimony to Moses's account of the deluge ; and shews that it must have been universal, or nearly so, however difficult it may be to us, either to find sources for so great a body of waters, or methods of removing them. That a comet had some share in this event seems highly probable from what Dr. Halley, and Mr. Whiston have observed of this matter : I guess also partly from the supposition, that some part of the tail of a comet was then attracted by the earth, and deposited there, partly from the great shortening of human life after the flood, and partly from the fermenting and inebriating quality of vegetable juices, which seems first to have appeared immediately after the flood, that a great change was made at the time of the flood in the constitution of natural bodies, and particularly in that of water. And it seems not improbable to me, that an enlargement of the respective spheres of attraction and repulsion, and of the force of these, in the small particles of water, might greatly contribute to account for some circumstances of the deluge, mentioned by Moses. For, by the increase of the sphere, and force of attraction, the waters suspended in the air or firmament in the form of a mist or vapour before

the flood; see Gen. ii. 5, 6. might be collected into large drops, and fall upon the earth. And their fall might give occasion to rarer watery vapours, floating at great distances from the earth in the planetary and intermundane spaces, to approach it, be in like manner condensed into large drops, and fall upon it. This might continue for forty days, the force with which the rare vapours approached the earth decreasing all the latter part of that time, and being at the end of it overpowered by the contrary force of the vapours raised from the earth, now covered with water, by the action of the sun, and of the wind, mentioned Gen. viii. 1. For it is evident, that the wind has great power in raising watery particles, *i. e.* putting them in a state of repulsion; and the wind here considered would be far stronger than that which now prevails in the Pacifick Ocean, since the whole globe was one great ocean during the height of the deluge. The cessation of the rain, and the increase of the sphere, and force of repulsion, above supposed, would in like manner favour the ascent of vapours from this great ocean. And thus the precedent vapours might be driven by subsequent ones into the planetary and intermundane spaces, beyond the earth's attraction. However, since the quantity of the subsequent vapours must perpetually decrease by the decrease of the surface of the ocean, a limit would be set to the ascent of the vapours, as was before to their descent.

According to this hypothesis, that state of our waters, which was superinduced at the deluge, may both be the cause of the rainbow, *i. e.* of drops of a size proper for this purpose, and exempt us from the danger of a second deluge. For a fresh intermixture of like cometical particles could not now superinduce a new state. The rainbow may therefore be a natural sign and evidence, 'that the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy the earth.'

As to the breaking up of the fountains of the great deep, mentioned Gen. vii. 11. though no satisfactory account has been given of this hitherto, yet surely there is great plausibility in supposing, that the increased attraction of a comet, consequent upon its near approach to the earth, might have some such effect, and at the same time contribute to produce such changes in the earth, as a mere deluge could not.

Civil history affords likewise many evidences, which support the Mosaick account of the deluge. Thus, First, We find from pagan authors, that the tradition of a flood was general, or even universal. Secondly, The paucity of mankind, and the vast tracts of uninhabited land, which are mentioned in the accounts of the first ages, shew that mankind are lately sprung from a small stock, and even suit the time assigned by Moses for the flood. Thirdly, The great number of small kingdoms, and petty states in the first ages, and the late rise of the great empires of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, &c. con-



cur to the same purpose. Fourthly, The invention and progress of arts and sciences concur likewise. And this last favours the Mosaick history of the antediluvians. For as he mentions little of their arts, so it appears from the late invention of them after the flood, that those who were preserved from it were possessed of few.

It has been objected to the Mosaick history of the deluge, that the ark could not contain all the animals which are now found upon the earth, with the proper provisions for them during the time of the deluge. But this, upon an accurate computation, has been proved to be otherwise ; so that what was thought an objection is even some evidence. For it is extremely improbable, that a person who had feigned the particular of the ark, should have come so near the proper dimensions. It is to be considered here, that the several species of both plants and brute animals, which differ from each other by small degrees, seem to be multiplied every day by the varieties of climates, culture, diet, mixture, &c. also, that if we suppose an universal deluge, the ark, with the entrance of the animals, &c. seem necessary also. For as we can trace up the first imperfect rudiments of the art of shipping among the Greeks, there could be no shipping before the flood ; consequently no animals could be saved. Nay, it is highly improbable, that even men, and domestick animals, could be saved, not to mention wild beasts, serpents, &c.

though we should suppose, that the antediluvians had shipping, unless we suppose also, that they had a divine intimation and direction about it, such as Moses relates ; which would be to give up the cause of infidelity at once.

It has been objected likewise, that the Negro nations differ so much from the Europeans, that they do not seem to have descended from the same ancestors. But this objection has no solid foundation. We cannot presume to say what alterations climate, air, water, soil, customs, &c. can or cannot produce. It is no ways to be imagined, that all the national difference in complexion, features, make of the bones, &c. require so many different originals ; on the contrary, we have reason from experience to assert, that various changes of this kind are made by the incidents of life, just as was observed, in the last paragraph, of plants, and brute animals. And, with respect to the different complexions of different nations, Dr. Mitchell has shewn with great appearance of truth, Phil. Trans. Numb. 474. that these arise from external influences. It will confirm this, if it be found, that the Jews, by residing in any country for some generations, approach to the complexion of the original natives. At the same time we must observe from the history of distempers, that acquired dispositions may be transmitted to the descendants for some generations ; which is perhaps one of the great truths intimated in the account of the fall. And thus

the children of Negroes may be black, though born and bred up in a country where the original natives are not so.

A third objection is, that it is difficult to account for the original of the Americans, and for the wild beasts and serpents that are found in that quarter of the world, according to the Mosaick history. But to this one may answer, First, That America may be even now contiguous to the north-east part of Asia. Secondly, That it might have been contiguous to other parts of our great continent for some centuries after the deluge, though that contiguity be since broken off. Thirdly, That the first sailors, who ventured out of the streights, or others, might be driven, by stress of weather, and their own ignorance, first within the influence of the trade-winds, and then to some part of America. One can offer nothing certain on either side, in respect of these points. However, it seems to me, that many customs found amongst the Negroes and Americans are stronger evidences, that they are of the same original with the Asiatics and Europeans, than any which have yet appeared to the contrary. And, upon the whole, I conclude certainly, that the Mosaick account of the deluge is much confirmed by both natural and civil history, if we embrace the first and lowest hypothesis concerning divine inspiration; and has very strong presumptions for it, according to the second or third.



If we could suppose the high mountains in South America not to have been immersed in the deluge, we might the more easily account for the wild beasts, poisonous serpents, and curious birds of America. Might not the ark be driven round the globe during the deluge? And might not Noah be aware of this, and observed that it had been immersed fifteen cubits in water? And may not the Mosaick account be partly a narrative of what Noah saw, partly the conclusions which he must naturally draw from thence? Thus the tops of some of the highest mountains might escape, consistently with the Mosaick account. The future inquiries of natural historians may perhaps determine this point.

The next great event recorded in Genesis is the confusion of languages. Now the Mosaick account of this appears highly probable, if we first allow that of the deluge. For it seems impossible to explain how the known languages should arise from one stock. Let any one try only in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and English. The changes which have happened in languages since history has been certain, do not at all correspond to a supposition of this kind. There is too much of method and art in the Greek and Latin tongues for them to have been the inventions of a rude and barbarous people; and they differ too much from Hebrew, Arabick, &c. to have flowed from them without design. As to the Chinese, it is difficult to make any probable

conjectures about it, partly from its great heterogeneity in respect of other languages, partly because learned men have not yet examined it accurately. However, the most probable conjecture seems to be, that it is the language of Noah's postdiluvian posterity ; the least probable one, that it could have flowed naturally from any known language, or from the same stock with any ; which it must have done, if we admit the deluge, and yet reject the confusion of languages.

The dispersion of the three sons of Noah into different countries, related in the tenth chapter of Genesis, comes next under consideration, being a consequence, not the cause, of the diversity of languages. Now here antiquarians, and learned men, seem to be fully agreed, that the Mosaick account is confirmed, as much as can be expected in our present ignorance of the state of ancient nations. And it is to be observed of all the articles treated of under this proposition, that we, who live in the north-west corner of Europe, lie under great disadvantages in such researches. However, since those who have studied the oriental languages and histories, or have travelled into the eastern parts, have made many discoveries of late years, which have surprizingly confirmed the scripture accounts, one may hope and presume, that if either our learned men be hereafter suffered to have free access to those parts, or the natives themselves become learned, both which are surely probable

in the highest degree, numberless unexpected evidences for the truth of the scripture history will be brought to light.

Let us next come to the state of religion in the ancient postdiluvian world, according to Moses, and the succeeding sacred historians. The postdiluvian patriarch then appeared to have worshipped the one Supreme Being by sacrifices, but in a simple manner, and to have had frequent divine communications. By degrees their posterity fell off to idolatry, worshipped the sun, moon, and stars, deified dead men, and polluted themselves with the most impure and abominable institutions. The Israelites alone were kept to the worship of the true God, and even they were often infected by their idolatrous neighbours. Now all this is perfectly agreeable to what we find in pagan history. The idolatries of the pagans are acknowledged on all hands. It appears also from pagan history, that they grew up by degrees, as the scriptures intimate. All the pagan religions appear to have had the worship of one god superiour to the rest, as their common foundation. They all endeavoured to render him propitious by sacrifice ; which surely cannot be an human invention, nor a custom, which, if invented in one nation, would be readily propagated to another. They all joined mediatorial and inferiour, also local and tutelar deities to the one god. And they all taught the frequency of divine communications. Hence the pagan religions appear to



be merely the degenerated offspring of patriarchal revelations, and to infer them as their cause. Hence the pretences of kings, lawgivers, priests, and great men, to inspiration, with the credulity of the multitude. That there had been divine communications, was beyond dispute ; and therefore all that reluctance to admit them, which appears in the present age, was over-ruled. At first there were no impostors. When therefore they did arise, it would not be easy for the multitude to distinguish between those who had really divine communications, and those who only pretended to them ; till at last all real inspiration having ceased among the gentile world, their several religions kept possession merely by the force of education, fraud in the priests, and fear in the people ; and even these supports began to fail at last, about the time of Christ's coming. And thus many things, which have been thought to weaken the evidences for the scripture accounts, are found to strengthen them, by flowing naturally from that state of religion in ancient times, and from that only, which the scripture delivers.

A farther confirmation of the same scripture accounts of the flood, dispersion of mankind, and patriarchal revelations, may be had from the following very remarkable particular : it appears from history, that the different nations of the world have had, *cæteris paribus*, more or less knowledge, civil and religious, in proportion as they were nearer to, or had more intimate

communication with Egypt, Palæstine, Chaldæa, and the other countries, that were inhabited by the most eminent persons amongst the first descendants of Noah, and by those who are said in scripture to have had particular revelations made to them by God ; and that the first inhabitants of the extreme parts of the world, reckoning Palæstine as the centre, were in general mere savages. Now all this is utterly inexplicable upon the footing of infidelity, of the exclusion of all divine communications. Why should not human nature be as sagacious, and make as many discoveries, civil and religious, at the Cape of Good Hope, or in America, as in Egypt, Palæstine, Mesopotamia, Greece, or Rome ? Nay, why should Palæstine so far exceed them all, as it did confessedly ? Allow the scripture accounts, and all will be clear and easy. Mankind, after the flood, were first dispersed from the plains of Mesopotamia. Some of the chief heads of families settled there, in Palæstine, and in Egypt. Palæstine had afterwards extraordinary divine illuminations bestowed upon its inhabitants, the Israelites and Jews. Hence its inhabitants had the purest notions of God, and the wisest civil establishment. Next after them come the Egyptians and Chaldæans, who, not being removed from their first habitations, and living in fertile countries watered by the Nile, Tigris, and Euphrates, may be supposed to have preserved more both of the antediluvian and postdiluvian revelations, also

to have had more leisure for invention, and a more free communication with the Israelites and Jews, than any other nations; whereas those small parties, which were driven farther and farther from each other into the extremes of heat and cold, entirely occupied in providing necessities for themselves, and also cut off by rivers, mountains, or distance from all communication with Palæstine, Egypt, and Chaldæa, would lose much of their original stock, and have neither inclination nor ability to invent more.

Let us now consider the history of particular facts, and inquire what attestations we can produce from pagan history for the scripture accounts of Abraham and his posterity, the Israelites and Jews. We cannot expect much here, partly because these things are of a private nature, if compared to the universal deluge, partly because the pagan history is either deficient, or grossly corrupted with fable and fiction, till we come to the times of the declension of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. However, some faint traces there are in ancient times, and many concurring circumstances in succeeding ones; and, as soon as the pagan records come to be clear and certain, we have numerous and strong confirmations of the sacred history. Thus the history of Abraham seems to have transpired in some measure. It is also probable that the ancient Brachmans were of his posterity by Keturah, that they derived their name from him, and worshipped the true God only.



Moses is mentioned by many heathen writers, and the accounts which they give of his conducting the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan are such as might be expected. The authors lived so long after Moses, and had so little opportunity or inclination to know the exact truth, or to be particular, that their accounts cannot invalidate the scripture history, though they do a little confirm it. The expulsion of the Canaanites by Joshua seems to have laid the foundation of the kingdom of the shepherds in the Lower Egypt mentioned by Manetho, and of the expulsion of the natives into the Upper Egypt; who, after some centuries drove the shepherds back again into Canaan about the time of Saul. The Canaanites mentioned by St. Austin and others, upon the coast of Africa, may be of the same original. See *Newton's Chronol.* page 198. We may conclude from the book of Judges, that there were many petty sovereignties in the neighbourhood of Canaan; and it appears from pagan history, as Sir Isaac Newton has rectified it, that the first great empire, that of Egypt, was not yet risen. When David subdued the Philistines or Phœnicians, Cadmus and others seem to have fled into Greece, and to have carried letters with them, which the Philistines had probably learnt, about a generation before, from the copy of the law found in the ark taken from the Israelites. After Solomon's temple was built, the temple of Vulcan in Egypt, and others in other places,

began to be built in imitation of it ; just as the oracles of the heathens were imitations of God's communications to the Israelites, and particularly of that by Urim and Thummim. Shishak, who came out of Egypt in the fifth year of Rehoboam, is the Sesostris of Herodotus ; and this point, being settled, becomes a capital pin, upon which all the pagan chronology depends. Hence Herodotus's list of the Egyptian kings is made probable and consistent. As we advance farther to the Assyrian monarchy, the scripture accounts agree with the profane ones rectified ; and when we come still farther to the æra of Nabonassar, and to the kings of Babylon and Persia, which are posterior to this æra, and recorded in Ptolemy's canon, we find the agreement of sacred and profane history much more exact, there being certain criterions in the profane history for fixing the facts related in it. And it is remarkable, that not only the direct relations of the historical books, but the indirect, incidental mention of things in the prophecies, tallies with true chronology ; which surely is such an evidence for their genuineness and truth, as cannot be called in question. And, upon the whole, it may be observed, that the sacred history is distinct, methodical, and consistent throughout ; the profane utterly deficient in the first ages, obscure and full of fictions in the succeeding ones ; and that it is but just clear and precise in the principal facts about the time that the sacred history ends. So that this corrects and regu-

lates that, and renders it intelligible in many instances, which must otherwise be given up as utterly inexplicable. How then can we suppose the sacred history not to be genuine and true, or a wicked imposture to rise up, and continue not only undiscovered, but even to increase to a most audacious height, in a nation which of all others kept the most exact accounts of time? I will add one remark more: this same nation, who may not have lost so much as one year from the creation of the world to the Babylonish captivity, as soon as they were deprived of the assistance of prophets, became most inaccurate in their methods of keeping time, there being nothing more erroneous than the accounts of Josephus, and the modern Jews, from the time of Cyrus, to that of Alexander the Great; notwithstanding that all the requisite assistances might easily have been borrowed from the neighbouring nations, who now kept regular annals. Hence it appears, that the exactness of the sacred history was owing to the divine assistance.

It is an evidence in favour of the scriptures, allied to those which I am here considering, that the manners of the persons mentioned in the scriptures have that simplicity and plainness, which is also ascribed to the first ages of the world by pagan writers; and both of them concur, by this, to intimate the novelty of the then present race, *i. e.* the deluge.



Besides these attestations from profane history, we may consider the Jews themselves as bearing testimony to this day, in all countries of the world, to the truth of their ancient history, *i. e.* to that of the Old and New Testaments. Allow this, and it will be easy to see how they should still persist in their attachment to that religion, those laws, and those prophecies, which so manifestly condemn them, both in past times, and in the present. Suppose any considerable alteration made in their ancient history, *i. e.* any such as may answer the purposes of infidelity, and their present state will be inexplicable.

The books of the New Testaments are verified by history, in a manner still more illustrious; these books being written, and the facts mentioned therein transacted, during the times of Augustus, Tiberius, and the succeeding Cæsars. Here we may observe,

First, That the incidental mention of the Roman emperours, governours of Judæa, and the neighbouring provinces, the Jewish high priests, sects of the Jews, and their customs, of places, and of transactions, is found to be perfectly agreeable to the histories of those times. And as the whole number of these particulars is very great, they may be reckoned a full proof of the genuineness of the books of the New Testament; it being impossible for a person who had forged them, *i. e.* who was not an eye and ear witness, and otherwise concerned with the transactions as the books require, but who had

invented many histories and circumstances, &c. not to have been deficient, superfluous and erroneous. No man's memory or knowledge is sufficient for such adaptation of feigned circumstances, and especially where the mention is incidental. Let any one consider how often the best poets fail in this, who yet endeavour not to vary from the manners and customs of the age of which they write; at the same time, that poetry neither requires nor admits so great a minuteness in the particular circumstances of time, place, and persons, as the writers of the New Testament have descended to naturally and incidentally.

Secondly, That Christ preached in Judæa and Galilee, made many disciples, and was crucified under Pontius Pilate, at the instigation of the chief men among the Jews; also that his disciples preached after his death, not only in Judæa, but all over the Roman empire; that they converted multitudes, were persecuted, and at last suffered death, for their firm adherence to their master; and that both Christ and his disciples pretended to work many miracles; are facts attested by civil history in the amplest manner, and which cannot be called in question. Now these facts are so connected with the other facts mentioned in the New Testament, that they must stand or fall together. There is no probable account to be given of these facts, but by allowing the rest. For the proof of this, I appeal to every reader who will make the trial. It

may also be concluded from the remarkable unwillingness of the present unbelievers to allow even the plainest facts in express terms. For it shews them to be apprehensive, that the connection between the several principal facts mentioned in the New Testament is inseparable, and that the attestation given to some by civil history may easily be extended to all.

It has been objected, that more mention ought to have been made of the common facts by the profane writers of those times, also some acknowledgment of the miraculous ones, had they been true. To this we may answer, First, That Judæa was but a small and distant province of the Roman empire, and the Jews themselves, with whom the christians were for a long time confounded, much despised by the Romans. Secondly, That historians, politicians, generals, &c. have their imaginations so much pre-occupied by affairs of state, that matters purely religious are little regarded by them. 'Gallio cared for none of these things.' Thirdly, That a person who attended in any great degree to the christian affairs, if a good man, could scarce avoid becoming a christian; after which his testimony ceases to be pagan, and becomes christian; of which I shall speak under the next head. Fourthly, That both those who were favourers of the christians, and those averse to them in a moderate degree, one of which must be the case with great numbers, would have motives to be silent; the half christians would



be silent for fear of being persecuted ; and the others would affect to take no notice of what they disliked, but could not disprove ; which is a fact that occurs to daily observation. Lastly, when these things are laid together, the attestations of the profane writers to the common facts appear to be such as one might expect, and their silence as to the miraculous ones is accounted for.

Thirdly, All the christian writers, from the time of the apostles and downwards, bear testimony to the genuineness of the books of the New Testament, and the truth of the facts, in a great variety of ways, direct and indirect, and in such manner as might be expected. Their quotations from them are numberless, and agree sufficiently with the present copies. They go every where upon the supposition of the facts, as the foundation of all their discourses, writings, hopes, fears, &c. They discover every where the highest regard, and even veneration, both for the books and the authors. In short, one cannot see how this testimony in favour of the books of the New Testament can be invalidated, unless by supposing all the ecclesiastical writings of the first centuries to be forged also ; or all the writers to have concurred to write as if they believed the genuineness and truth of these books, though they did not ; or to have had no ability or inclination to distinguish genuineness and truth from forgery and falsehood ;

or by some other such supposition, as will scarce bear to be named.

Here three questions may be asked, that bear some relation to this subject ; and the answers to which will, I think, illustrate and confirm what has been advanced in the last paragraph.

Thus, First, It may be asked, why we have not more accounts of the life of Christ transmitted to us ? To this I answer, that it is probable from St. Luke's preface, that there were many short and imperfect accounts handed about very early ; the authors of which, though they had not taken care to inform themselves accurately, did not, however, endeavour to impose on others designedly ; and that all these grew into disuse, of course, after the four gospels, or perhaps the three first, were published, or, at least, after the canon of the New Testament was formed ; also, that after this the christians were so perfectly satisfied, and had the four gospels in such esteem, that no one presumed to add any other accounts, and especially as all the apostles were then dead.

The second question is, how come we to have so little account, in the primitive writers, of the lives, labours, and sufferings of the apostles ? I answer that the apostles seem to have resided in Judæa, till Nero's army invaded it, and afterwards to have travelled into distant parts ; and that neither their converts in Judæa, nor those in the distant barbarous countries, into which they travelled, could have any probable motive

for writing their lives : also, that, as to other christians, they had neither opportunities nor motives. The christians looked up to Christ, as their master, not to the apostles. Their great business was to promote christianity, not to gratify their own or other's fruitless curiosity. They were not learned men, who had spent their lives in the study of annalists and biographers. They did not suspect, that an account of the lives of the apostles would ever be wanted, or that any one could call their integrity, inspiration, miracles, &c. in question. St. Luke seems to have designed by his Acts, chiefly to shew how the gospel first got firm footing amongst Jews, proselytes of the gate, and idolatrous gentiles ; in order to encourage the new converts to copy the examples of the apostles, and first preachers, and to publish the gospel in all nations. Lastly, the primitive christians had early disputes with Jews, heathens, hereticks, and even with one another ; which took up much of their attention and concern.

Thirdly, It may be asked, who were the persons that forged the spurious acts and revelations of several of the apostles, &c. ? I answer, that, amongst the number of those who joined themselves to the christians, there must be many whose hearts were not truly purified, and who, upon apostatizing, would become more self-interested, vain-glorious, and impure than before. These were antichrists, as St. John calls them, who left the church because



they were not of it. Some of these forged books to support themselves, and establish their own tenets. Others might write partly like enthusiasts, partly like impostors. And, lastly, There were some both weak and wicked men, though not so abandoned as the ancient heretics, who in the latter end of the second century, and afterwards, endeavoured to make converts by forgeries, and such other wicked arts. However, all those who were usually called fathers, in the first ages, stand remarkably clear of such charges.

Fourthly, The propagation of christianity, with the manner in which it was opposed by both Jews and gentiles, bears witness to the truth and genuineness of the books of the New Testament. But I forbear entering upon this argument, as it will come more properly in another place. Let me only observe here, that there are many passages in the Talmudical writings, which afford both light and confirmation to the New Testament, notwithstanding that one principal design of the authors was to discredit it.

THE AGREEMENT OF THE BOOKS OF THE OLD AND  
NEW TESTAMENTS WITH THEMSELVES AND WITH  
EACH OTHER, IS AN ARGUMENT BOTH OF THEIR  
GENUINENESS AND TRUTH.

THE truth of this proposition will be evident, if a sufficient number of these mutual agreements can be made out. It is never found, that any single person, who deviates much from the truth, can be so perfectly upon his guard as to be always consistent with himself. Much less therefore can this happen in the case of a number living also in different ages. Nothing can make them consistent, but their copying faithfully after real facts. The instances will make this clearer.

The laws of the Israelites are contained in the Pentateuch, and referred to in a great variety of ways, direct and indirect, in the historical books, in the Psalms, and in the Prophecies. The historical facts also in the preceding books are often referred to in those that succeed, and in the Psalms and Prophecies. In like manner the gospels have the greatest harmony with each other, and the Epistles of St. Paul with the Acts of the Apostles. And indeed one may say, that there is scarce any book of either Old or New Testament, which may not be shewn to refer to many of the rest in some way or other. For it is to be observed, that the Bible has been studied and commented upon far more

than any other book whatsoever ; and that it has been the business of believers in all ages to find out the mutual relations of its parts, and of unbelievers to search for inconsistencies ; also that the first meet every day with more and more evidences in favour of the scriptures from the mutual agreements and coincidences here considered ; and that unbelievers have never been able to allege any inconsistencies that could in the least invalidate the truth of the principal facts ; I think, not even affect the divine inspiration of the historical books, according to the second or third hypothesis above-mentioned.

It will probably illustrate this proposition, to bring a parallel instance from the Roman writers. Suppose then that no more remained of these writers than Livy, Tully, and Horace. Would they not by their references to the same facts and customs, by the sameness of style in the same writer, and differences in the different ones, and numberless other such like circumstances of critical consideration, prove themselves, and one another to be genuine, and the principal facts related, or alluded to, to be true ?

It is also to be observed, that this mutual harmony and self-consistency, in its ultimate ratio, is the whole of the evidence which we have for facts done in ancient times or distant places. Thus, if a person was so sceptical as to call in question the whole Roman history, even the most notorious facts, as their conquests



first of Italy, and then of the neighbouring countries, the death of Cæsar, and the fall of the western empire by the invasions of the Goths and Vandals, with all the evidences of these from books, inscriptions, coins, customs, &c. as being all forged in order to deceive ; one could only shew him, that it is inconsistent with what he sees of human nature, to suppose that there should be such a combination to deceive ; or that the agreement of these evidences with each other is far too great to be the effect of any such fraudulent design, of chance, &c. And all these agreements are, in effect, only bringing a number of concurring evidences, whose sum total soon approaches to the ultimate limit, *i. e.* to unity, or absolute certainty, nearer than by any distinguishable difference. It does not therefore import, in respect of real conviction, after a certain number are brought, whether we bring any more or not ; they can only add this imperceptible defect, *i. e.* practically nothing. Thus I suppose that the remaining writings of Livy, Tully, and Horace alone would satisfy any impartial man so much of the general extensiveness of the Roman conquests, &c. that nothing perceptible could be added to his conviction ; no more than any common event can, or ever does in fact, appear more credible from the testimony of a thousand than of ten or twenty witnesses of approved integrity. And whoever will apply this reasoning to the present case, must perceive, as it appears to me, that

the numberless minute, direct, and indirect agreements and coincidences, that present themselves to all diligent readers of the scriptures, prove their truth and genuineness beyond all contradiction, at least according to the first and lowest hypothesis concerning divine inspiration.

As to those few and small apparent inconsistencies, which are supposed to confine the inspiration of the scriptures to this lowest sense ; one may observe, that they decrease every day as learned men inquire farther ; and that, were the scriptures perfectly exact in every particular, there must be some apparent difficulties, arising merely from our ignorance of ancient languages, customs, distant places, &c. and consequently, that if these be not more, than our ignorance makes it reasonable to expect, they are no objection at all. And of apparent inconsistencies one may remark in particular, that they exclude the supposition of forgery. No single forger or combination of forgers, would have suffered the apparent inconsistencies which occur in a few places, such as the different genealogies of Christ in St. Matthew and St. Luke, and some little variations in the narration of the same fact in different gospels. These are too obvious at first sight not to have been prevented had there been any fraud.

I will here add an hypothesis, by which, as it appears to me, one may reconcile the genealogies of St. Matthew and St. Luke. I suppose then, that St. Matthew relates the real pro-

genitors of Joseph ; St. Luke the series of those who were heirs to David by birthright ; and that both transcribed from genealogical tables, well known to the jews of those times. St. Matthew after David takes Solomon, from whom Joseph lineally descended. St. Luke takes Nathan, upon whom, though younger than some others, and even than Solomon, we must suppose the birthright to be conferred, as in the instances of Jacob and Joseph. St. Matthew proceeds by real descent to Salathiel, at the time of the captivity ; St. Luke proceeds by the heirs according to birthright, and comes to Salathiel likewise. We must therefore suppose, that Salathiel, Solomon's heir, was now David's also, by the extinction of all the branches of Nathan's family. St. Matthew then takes Zorobabel as Joseph's real progenitor. St. Luke takes him as heir or eldest son to Salathiel. Again, St. Matthew takes Abiud the real progenitor, St. Luke Rhesa the eldest son ; and thus St. Matthew proceeds by lineal descent to Joseph, St. Luke by heirs to the same Joseph ; for we are to suppose, that Heli dying without heirs male, Joseph became his heir by birthright, *i. e.* heir to Zerobabel, *i. e.* to David. If we farther suppose, that the virgin Mary was daughter to Heli, for which there appears to be some evidence, the solution will be more complete, and more agreeable to the jewish customs. It confirms this solution, that St. Matthew uses the word *γεννησας* which re-



strains his genealogy to lineal descent ; whereas St. Luke uses the article *τὸν*, which is very general. It confirms it also, that St. Luke's descents, reckoning from David to Salathiel, are but about twenty-two years apiece ; which is so much too short for descents from father to son, but agrees very well to descents by birth-right. As to St. Matthew's descents, they are far too long, after the captivity, for descents from father to son ; but then it is easy to suppose, that some were left out on account of dying before their fathers, or some other reason. Three of the kings of Judah are left out after Joram, perhaps on account of their being of the immediate posterity of the idolatrous Ahab's daughter Athaliah. Others are left out after the captivity, perhaps for some similar reason.

THE UNITY OF DESIGN, WHICH APPEARS IN THE DISPENSATIONS RECORDED IN THE SCRIPTURES, IS AN ARGUMENT NOT ONLY OF THEIR TRUTH AND GENUINENESS BUT ALSO OF THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY.

FOR this unity is not only so great as to exclude forgery and fiction, in the same way as the mutual agreements mentioned in the last proposition, but also greater than the best and ablest men could have preserved, in the circumstances of these writers, without the divine assistance. In order to see this, let us inquire what this design is, and how it is pursued by

the series of events, and divine interpositions, recorded in the scriptures.

The design is that of bringing all mankind to an exalted, pure, and spiritual happiness, by teaching, enforcing, and begetting in them love and obedience to God. This appears from many passages in the Old Testament, and from almost every part of the New. Now we are not here to inquire in what manner an almighty being could soonest and most effectually accomplish this. But the question is, whether, laying down the state of things as it has been, is, and probably will be, for our foundation, there be not a remarkable fitness in the dispensations ascribed to God in the scriptures, to produce this glorious effect ; and whether the persons who administered these dispensations did not here concur with a surprising uniformity, though none of them saw God's ultimate design completely, and some but very imperfectly ; just as brutes by their instincts, and children by the workings of their natural faculties, contribute to their own preservation, improvement, and happiness without at all foreseeing, that they do this. If we alter any of the circumstances of the microcosm or macrocosm, of the frame of our own natures, or of the external world that surrounds us, we shall have question rise up after question in an endless series, and shall never be satisfied, unless God should be pleased to produce happiness instantaneously, *i. e.* without any means, or secondary instru-

mental causes at all ; and, even then, we should only be where we were at our first setting out, if things be considered in the true ultimate light. We are therefore to lay down the real state of things, as our foundation, *i. e.* we are to suppose man to be in a state of good mixed with evil, born with appetites, and exposed to temptations, to which if he yields, suffering must follow ; which suffering, however, tends to eradicate the disposition, from whence it flowed, and to implant a better : we are to suppose him to be endued with voluntary powers, which enable him to model his affections and actions according to a rule ; and that the love of God, his ultimate happiness, can never be genuine, but by his first learning to fear God, by his being mortified to pleasure, honour, and profit, and the most refined selfish desires, and by his loving his neighbour as himself, *i. e.* we must suppose all that which practical writers mean by a state of trial, temptation, moral exercise and improvement, and of practical free-will. Let us see therefore, how the several dispensations mentioned in the scriptures, their being recorded there, and the subordinate parts, which the prophets and apostles acted, conspired to bring about this ultimate end of man, both in each individual, and in the whole aggregate, considered as one great individual, as making up the mystical body of Christ, according to the language of St. Paul ; and inquire, whether, if all other reasons were set aside, the mere harmony



and concurrence of so many parts, and so many persons removed from each other by long intervals of time, in this one great design, will not compel us to acknowledge the genuineness, truth, and divine authority, of the scriptures.

The first thing which presents itself to us in the scriptures, is the history of the creation and fall. These are not to be accounted for, as was said above, being the foundation upon which we go. However, the recording them by Moses, as tradition began to grow weak and uncertain, has been of great use to all those, who have had them communicated by this means perfectly or imperfectly, *i. e.* to a great part of the world. This history impresses an awful and amiable sense of the Divine Being, our creator and judge; shews the heinousness of sin; and mortifies us to this world, by declaring that our passage through it must be attended with labour and sorrow. We find ourselves in this state; revealed religion did not bring us into it; nor is this state an objection to revealed religion, more than to natural: however, revealed religion goes a step higher than natural, and shews the immediate secondary cause, *viz.* the sin and wilful disobedience of our first parents. And when the account of paradise, of man's expulsion thence, and of the curse past upon him in the beginning of Genesis, are compared with the removal of this curse, of sorrow, crying, pain, and death, with the renovation of all things, and with man's restoration to the

tree of life and paradise, and his admission into the new Jerusalem in the last chapters of the revelation, hope and fear quicken each other ; and both conspire to purify the mind, and to advance the great design considered under this proposition.

How far the deluge was necessary, *cæteris manentibus*, for the purification of those who were destroyed by it, *i. e.* for accomplishing this great end in them, we cannot presume to say. It is sufficient, that there is no contrary presumption, that no methods consistent with the state of things in the ancient world were neglected, as far as we know, and that we are not in the least able to propose a better scheme. We leave these rebellious, unhappy people, now translated into another state, to the same kind Providence which attended them in this, and all whose punishments on this side the grave are for melioration. However, the evident footsteps of this in the world, and the clear tradition of it, which would continue for several ages, also the history of it delivered by Moses, have an unquestionable good tendency. Sinners, who reflect at all, cannot but be alarmed at so dreadful an instance of divine severity. Farther, if this history should open to us a new relation, viz. that which we bear to the comets, this, compared with other parts of the scriptures, may give us hereafter such intimations concerning the kind, degree, and duration of future punishment, as will make the most obdurate



tremble, and work in them that fear which is the beginning of wisdom, and of the perfect love which casteth out fear. At the same time we may observe, that the covenant which God made, not only with Noah and his posterity, but with all living creatures, after the flood, has a direct and immediate tendency to beget love.

The confusion of languages, the consequent dispersion of mankind, and the shortening of the lives of the postdiluvians, all concurred to check the exorbitant growth and infection of wickedness. And we may judge how necessary these checks were, *cæteris manentibus*, from the great idolatry and corruption which appeared in the world within less than a thousand years after the flood. The patriarchal revelations mentioned and intimated by Moses had the same good effects, and were the foundation of those pagan religions, and, in great measure, of that moral sense, which, corrupt and imperfect as they were, could not but be far preferable to an entire want of these. If it be objected, that, according to this, greater checks, and more divine communications, were wanted; I answer, that a greater dispersion, or shortening of human life, might have prevented the destined increase of mankind, or the growth of knowledge, civil and religious, &c. and that more or more evident divine interpositions might have restrained the voluntary powers too much, or have precluded that faith which is necessary to our ultimate perfection. These are conjectures indeed;



but they are upon the level with the objection, which is conjectural also.

The next remarkable particular that occurs, is the calling of Abraham, the father of the faithful. Now in this part of the scripture history, as it is explained by the New Testament, we have the strongest evidences of God's great design to purify and perfect mankind. He is called to forsake his relations, friends and country, lest he should be corrupted by idolatry ; he receives the promise of the land of Canaan, without seeing any probable means of obtaining it, besides this promise, in order to wean him from the dependence on external means ; he waits for a son till all natural expectations ceased, for the same purpose ; by obtaining him he learns to trust in God notwithstanding apparent impossibilities ; and the command to sacrifice ' his son, his only son Isaac, whom he loved,' affords him a noble opportunity of exercising this trust, and of shewing, that his principle of obedience to God was already superiour to the purest of earthly perfections. Lastly, when God promises him, as a reward for all his faith and obedience, as the highest blessing, that ' in him and his seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed,' we must conceive this to be a declaration, first, that God himself is infinitely benevolent ; and, secondly, that the happiness of Abraham, of his seed, and of all mankind who were to be blessed in his seed, must arise from their imitation of God in his benevolence. This whole

universe is therefore a system of benevolence, or, as St. Paul expresses it, a body, which, being 'fitly framed and compacted together, increaseth itself in love.

As to the objection that is sometimes made to the sacrifice of Isaac, we may observe, that Abraham had himself received so many divine communications, and had been acquainted with so many made to his ancestors, that he had no doubt about the commands coming from God, did not even ask himself the question. It is probable that in that early age there had as yet been few or no false pretences, or illusions. Abraham could as little doubt of God's right to Isaac's life, or of his care of him in another state. These things were parts of the patriarchal religion. And yet great faith was required in Abraham, before he could overcome his natural affection and tenderness for Isaac out of a principle of obedience to God, and trust God for the accomplishment of his promise, though he commanded him to destroy the only apparent means of accomplishing it. Unless Abraham had been highly advanced in faith and obedience, he could not have stood so severe a trial; but this trial would greatly confirm these. And thus this history is so far from being liable to objection, that it is peculiarly conformable to those methods, which mere reason and experience dictate as the proper ones, for advancing and perfecting true religion in the soul. When the typical nature of it is also considered, one



cannot surely doubt of its divine authority. And, in the previous steps, through which Abraham passed in order to obtain this blessing, we have an adumbration and example of that faith, patience, and gradual progress in the spiritual life, which are necessary to all those who hope to be 'blessed with faithful Abraham.'

Let us next pass on to Moses and the Israelites under his conduct. Here we enter upon the consideration of that people, who are the type of mankind in general, and of each individual in particular; who were the keepers of the oracles of God, and who, under God, agreeably to his promise to Abraham, have been, and will hereafter be a blessing to all nations, and the means of restoring man to his paradisaical state. And first they are oppressed with a cruel slavery in Egypt, lest, being delighted with its fertility, and the present pleasures of sense which it afforded, they should forget their true earthly country, 'the land of promise.' They then see the most amazing judgments inflicted upon their enemies the Egyptians by God, whilst they themselves were protected and delivered, that so they might learn confidence in his power and favour, and be thus prepared for their institution in religion, and their trial and purification in the wilderness. And here the awful delivery of the law, their being fed from day to day by miracle, their being kept from all commerce with other nations, and from all cares of this world in building, planting, &c. till their



old habits, and Egyptian customs and idolatries, were quite effaced, and the practice of the new law established, their having the history of the world, and particularly of their ancestors, laid before them in one view, their tabernacle, their numerous rites and ceremonies, additional to those of the patriarchal religion, and opposite to the growing idolatries of their neighbours the Egyptians and Canaanites, and which, besides their uses as types, were memorials of their relation to God, and of his constant presence and protection, and, lastly, the total extinction of that murmuring generation, who longed for the flesh-pots of Egypt, cannot but appear to be intended for the purification of this chosen people, as being remarkably analogous to the methods of purification, which every good man experiences in himself, and sees in others, *i. e.* cannot but appear highly conducive to the great design considered under this proposition. At last, the education and instruction of this people being finished, they are admitted to inherit the earthly promise made to their forefathers, and take possession of the land of Canaan under Joshua. And thus we come to a remarkable period in God's dispensations to them.

Now therefore they are, in some measure, left to themselves, for the sake of moral improvement, the divine interpositions being far less frequent and solemn, than at the first erection of the theocracy under Moses's administration. However, there were many superna-

tural interpositions, appointments, favours, corrections, &c. from Joshua to Malachi, on account of their yet infant state in respect of internal purity, whose tendency to improve both the body politick of the nation, and each individual, is sufficiently evident. After Malachi they were entirely left to themselves; their canon being completed, they were then only to hear and digest what Moses and the prophets had delivered unto them; and by this means to prepare themselves for the last and completest dispensation.

But, before we enter upon this, let us briefly consider the state of the gentile world, in the interval between Abraham and Christ, and what intimations the Old Testament gives us of their being also under the care of Providence, and in a state of moral discipline. They had then, according to this, First, the traditions of patriarchal revelations. Secondly, All the nations in the neighbourhood of Canaan had frequent opportunities and motives to inform themselves of the true religion. Thirdly, All those who conquered them at any time could not but learn something both from their subjection, and their deliverance afterwards. Fourthly, The captivities by Salmaneser and Nebuchadnezzar carried the knowledge of the true God to many distant nations. Lastly, The distraction of the jewish state during the cotemporary empires of Syria and Egypt, the rise of the Samaritan religion, and the translation of the Old



Testament into Greek, conduced eminently to the same purpose. And as it is necessary in the present state of things, for the exercise of various affections, and our moral improvement, that there should be degrees and subordinations in common things, so it seems equally necessary, that it should be so in religious matters : and thus the Gentiles may have had, in the interval between Abraham and Christ, all that suited their other circumstances, all that they could have improved by internal voluntary purity, other things remaining the same, which is always supposed. And it is remarkable in the view of this proposition, that we learn so much from the scriptures concerning the moral discipline which God afforded to the Gentiles.

When we come to the New Testament, the great design of all God's dispensations appears in a still more conspicuous manner. Here we see how Christ began to erect his spiritual kingdom, and the apostles extended it ; we have the sublimest doctrines, and purest precepts, for effecting it in ourselves and others, and the strongest assurances, that it will be effected at last, that this leaven will continue to operate till the whole lump be leavened. But, above all, it is remarkable, that the principal means for effecting this is by submission and sufferance, not resistance and external violence. The preachers are to undergo shame, persecution, and death, as the Lord of life and glory did before them. This is that ' foolishness of God,' which



is 'wiser than men,' and that 'weakness of God,' which is 'stronger than men.' These means seem foolish and weak to the false wisdom of this world. But if they be compared with the frame of our natures, and with the real constitution of things, they will appear to be perfectly suited to produce in all mankind that best of ends, the annihilation of self, and worldly desires, and the pure and perfect love of God, and of all his creatures in and through him.

Setting aside therefore the greatness of this end, and its suitableness to the divine goodness, setting aside also the miracles that have concurred in it, I say that the coincidence of the histories, precepts, promises, threatenings, and prophecies of the scriptures in this one point is an argument not only of their genuineness and truth, but of their divine authority. Had the writers been guided by their own spirits, and not by the supernatural influences of the spirit of truth, they could neither have opened to us the various dispensations of God tending to this one point, nor have pursued it themselves, with such entire steadiness and uniformity, through so many different ages of the world.

The gradual opening of this design is an argument to the same purpose. Man's wisdom, if it could have formed such a design would have rushed forward upon it prematurely. At the same time we may observe, that this design is implied in the scriptures from the first, though not ex-

pressed so as to be then understood : which is another argument of their divine original.

COR. From the reasoning used under this proposition we may be led to believe, that all the great events which happened in the world, have the same use as the dispensations recorded in the scriptures, viz. that of being a course of moral discipline for nations and individuals, and of preparing the world for future dispensations. Thus the irruption of the barbarous nations into the Roman empire, the Mahometan imposture, the corruptions of the christian religion, the ignorance and darkness which reigned for some centuries during the grossest of these corruptions, the reformation, restoration of letters, and the invention of printing, three great contemporary events which succeeded the dark times, the rise of the enthusiastical sects since the reformation, the vast increase and diffusion of learning in the present times, the growing extensiveness of commerce between various nations, the great prevalence of infidelity amongst both jews and christians, the dispersion of jews and jesuits into all known parts of the world, &c. &c. are all events, which, however mischievous some of them may seem to human wisdom, are *cæteris manentibus*, the most proper and effectual way of hastening the kingdom of Christ, and the renovation of all things.



DIVINE COMMUNICATIONS, MIRACLES, AND PROPHECIES, ARE AGREEABLE TO NATURAL RELIGION, AND EVEN SEEM NECESSARY IN THE INFANCY OF THE WORLD.

SINCE God is a being of infinite justice, mercy, and bounty, according to natural religion, it is reasonable to expect, that if the deficiencies of natural reason, or the inattention of mankind to the footsteps of his providence, were such at any time, as that all the world were in danger of being lost in ignorance, irreligion, and idolatry, God should interpose by extraordinary instruction, by alarming instances of judgment and mercy, and by prophetic declarations of things to come, in order to teach men his power, his justice, and his goodness, by sensible proofs and manifestations. We must not say here, that God could not suffer this; but inquire from history, whether he has or not. Now I suppose it will easily be acknowledged, that this was the case with the gentile world in ancient times, and that the judaical and christian institutions have greatly checked irreligion and idolatry, and advanced true natural religion; which is a remarkable coincidence in favour of these institutions, though all other evidences for them were set aside. Neither must we say here, that since God permits gross ignorance in some nations, the Hottentots for instance, even to this day, he might have permitted it in all mankind. Allow



that we know so little of his unsearchable judgments, as not to be able to make any certain conclusion : yet surely it is much more agreeable to the forenamed attributes, and to the analogies of other things, that the bulk of mankind should have such a knowledge of God, as suits their intellectual faculties, and other circumstances, and carries them forward in moral improvement, than that all should stand still, or go backwards, or make less improvement in religion, than tallies with their improvements in other things ; also that there should be a subordination in religious advantages, rather than a perfect equality.

Natural religion also teaches us to consider God as our governour, judge, and father. Now all these superiours have two ways of administration, instruction and providence for the well-being of their inferiours, ordinary and extraordinary. It is therefore natural to expect upon great occasions an extraordinary interposition by revelation, miracle, and prophecy ; and that especially in that infancy of the world after the deluge, which both sacred and profane history assure us of ; inasmuch as both states and individuals require much more of the extraordinary interposition of governours and parents in their infancy, than afterwards : all which has a remarkable correspondence with the history of revelation, as it is in fact. And the analogical presumptions for miracles, in this and the last paragraph, seem at least equal to any presump-

tion we have, or can have, in this our state of ignorance of the whole of things, against them.

But there is another argument in favour of miraculous interpositions, which may be drawn from the foregoing theory of human nature. I take it for granted, that mankind have not been upon this earth from all eternity. Eternity neither suits an imperfect finite race of beings, nor our habitation the earth. It cannot have revolved round the sun, as it does now, from all eternity; it must have had such changes made in it from its own fabrick and principles, from the shocks of comets, &c. in infinite time, as would be inconsistent with our survival. There was therefore a time when man was first placed upon the earth. In what state was he then placed? An infant, with his mind a blank, void of ideas, as children now are born? He would perish instantly, without a series of miracles to preserve, educate, and instruct him. Or if he be supposed an adult with a blank mind, *i. e.* without ideas, associations, and the voluntary powers of walking, handling, speaking, &c. the conclusion is the same; he must perish also, unless conducted by a miraculous interposition and guardianship. He must therefore have so much of knowledge, and of voluntary and secondarily automatick powers, amongst which speech must be reckoned as a principal one, impressed upon him in the way of instinct, as would be necessary for his own preservation, and that of his offspring; and this instinct is, to



all intents and purposes, divine revelation, since he did not acquire it by natural means. It is also of the nature of prophecy ; for it seems impossible for mankind to subsist upon the earth, as it now is, without some foreknowledge, and the consequent methods of providing for futurity, such, for instance, as brutes have, or even greater, since man, unprovided with manual arts, is peculiarly exposed to dangers, necessities, and hardships.

Let us next consider, how the first men are to be provided with the knowledge of God, and a moral sense ; for it seems necessary, that they should be possessed of some degree of these ; else the sensual and selfish desires would be so exorbitant, as to be inconsistent both with each man's own safety, and with that of his neighbour ; as may be gathered from the accounts of savage nations, who yet are not entirely destitute of the knowledge of God, and the moral sense. Now, to deduce the existence and attributes of God, even in a very imperfect manner, from natural phænomena, requires, as it seems to me, far more knowledge and ratiocination, than men could have for many generations, from their natural powers ; and that especially if we suppose language not to be inspired, but attained in a natural way. And it appears both from the foregoing account of the moral sense, and from common observation, that this requires much time, care, and cultivation, besides the previous knowledge of God,



before it can be a match for the impetuosity of natural desires. We may conclude therefore, that the first men could not attain to that degree of the knowledge of God, and a moral sense, which was necessary for them, without divine inspiration.

There are several particulars in the Mosaick account of the creation, fall, and circumstances of the ancient world, which tally remarkably with the method of reasoning used here. Thus, man is at first placed in a paradise, where there was nothing noxious, and consequently where he would need less miraculous interposition in order to preserve him. He lives upon the fruits of the earth, which want no previous art of preparing them, and which would strike him by their smells, and, after an instance or two, incite him to pluck and taste: whereas animal diet, besides its inconsistency with a state of pure innocence and happiness, requires art and preparation necessarily. There is only one man, and one woman, created, that so the occasions for exerting the social affections may not offer themselves in any great degree, before these affections are generated; but, on the contrary, the affections may grow naturally, as it were, out of the occasions. The nakedness, and want of shame, in our first parents, are concurring evidences of the absence of art, acquired affections, evil, &c. *i. e.* of a paradisaical state. In this state they learnt to give names to the animal world, perhaps from the automatick and semi-

voluntary exertions of the organs of speech, which the sight of the creatures, or the sound of their several cries, would excite; having probably a sufficient stock of language for communication with God and for conversing with each other about their daily food, and other necessary things, given them by immediate instinct or inspiration. And thus they would be initiated, by naming the animals, into the practice of inventing, learning, and applying words. For the same reasons, we may suppose, that they learnt many other things, and particularly the habit of learning, during their abode in paradise. Nay, it may perhaps be, that the growth of acquired knowledge, with the pleasantness of it, might put them upon learning evil as well as good, and excite the forbidden curiosity. After the fall, we find God providing them with clothes, Cain banished from the presence of God, an argument that others were permitted to have recourse to his presence to ask counsel, &c. his posterity inventing arts for themselves, Enoch and Noah walking with God before the flood, and Abraham afterwards; all the antediluvian patriarchs long-lived, the postdiluvian long-lived also for some generations; amongst other reasons, that they might instruct posterity in religious and other important truths; and the divine interpositions continuing through the whole antediluvian world, and gradually withdrawn in the postdiluvian. And it seems to me, to say the least, a very difficult thing for any



man, even at this day, to invent a more probable account of the first peopling of this earth, than that which Moses has given us.

THE OBJECTION MADE AGAINST THE MIRACLES RECORDED IN THE SCRIPTURES, FROM THEIR BEING CONTRARY TO THE COURSE OF NATURE, IS OF LITTLE OR NO FORCE.

It is alleged here by the objectors, that the course of nature is fixed and immutable ; and that this is evinced by the concurrent testimony of all mankind in all ages ; and consequently that the testimony of a few persons, who affirm the contrary, cannot be admitted ; but is, *ipso facto*, invalidated by its opposing general, or even universal experience. Now to this I answer,

First, That we do not, by admitting the testimony of mankind concerning the descent of heavy bodies upon the surface of our earth, the common effects of heat and cold, &c. suppose that this invalidates the testimony of those who declare they have met the contrary appearances in certain cases. Each party testifies what they have seen ; and why may not the evidence of both be true ? It does not follow, because a thing has happened a thousand, or ten thousand times, that it never has failed, nor ever can fail. Nothing is more common or constant, than the effect of gravity in making all bodies upon the surface of our earth tend to its centre. Yet the



rare extraordinary influences of magnetism and electricity can suspend this tendency. Now, before magnetism and electricity were discovered, and verified by a variety of concurrent facts, there would have been as much reason to disallow the evidence of their particular effects attested by eye-witnesses, as there is now to disallow the particular miracles recorded in the scriptures; and yet we see that such a disallowance would have been a hasty conclusion, would have been quite contrary to the true nature of things. And, in fact, whatever may be the case of a few persons, and particularly of those, who think that they have an interest in disproving revealed religion, the generality of mankind, learned and unlearned, philosophical and vulgar, in all ages, have had no such disposition to reject a thing well attested by witnesses of credit, because it was contrary to the general, or even universal, tenor of former observations. Now it is evident to considering persons, especially if they reflect upon the foregoing history of association, that the dispositions to assent and dissent are generated in the human mind from the sum total of the influences, which particular observations have had upon it. It follows, therefore, since the bulk of mankind, of all ranks and orders, have been disposed to receive facts the most surprizing, and contrary to the general tenor, upon their being attested in a certain limited degree, that extraordinary facts are not, in a certain way of considering the thing, out

of the tenure of nature, but agreeable to it ; that here therefore, as well as in common facts, the stress is to be laid upon the credibility of the witnesses ; and that to do otherwise is an argument either of some great singularity of mind, or of an undue bias.

Secondly, If it should be alleged by the objectors, that they do not mean by the course of nature, that tenor of common observations which occurred to the first rude ages of the world, or even that tenor which is usually called so at present ; but those more general laws of matter and motion, to which all the various phænomena of the world, even those which are apparently most contrary to one another, may be reduced ; and that it is probable, that universal experience would concur to support the true laws of nature of this kind, were mankind sufficiently industrious and accurate in bringing together the facts, and drawing the conclusions from them ; in which case, any deviations from the tenure of nature, thus supported and explained, would be far more improbable, than according to the supposition of the foregoing paragraph ; we answer, that this objection is a mere conjecture. Since we do not yet know what these true laws of matter and motion are, we cannot presume to say whether all phænomena are reducible to them, or not. Modern philosophers have indeed made great advances in natural knowledge ; however, we are still in our infant state, in respect of it, as much as former ages, if the



whole of things be taken into consideration. And this objection allows and supposes it to be so. Since therefore it was the proper method for former ages, in order to make advances in real knowledge, to abide by the award of credible testimonies, however contrary these testimonies might appear to their then notions and analogies, so this is also the proper method for us.

If indeed we put the course of nature for that series of events, which follow each other in the order of cause and effect by the divine appointment, this would be an accurate and philosophical way of speaking; but then we must at once acknowledge, that we are so ignorant of what may be the divine purposes and appointments, of secret causes, and of the corresponding variety of events, that we can only appeal to the facts, to credible relations of what actually has been, in order to know what is agreeable to the course of nature thus explained. The scripture miracles may not be at all contrary to its fixedness and immutability. Nor can any objection lie against them, if we consider things in this light, from the present notions of philosophical men, *i. e.* from the course of nature, understood in a popular sense; since this falls so short of the true course of nature as here defined, *i. e.* as admitting the instrumentality of beings superiour to us, men divinely inspired, good angels, evil spirits, and many other influ-



ences, of which our present philosophy can take no cognizance.

With respect to moral analogy, the case is somewhat different. If the moral attributes of God, and the general rules of his providence, be supposed to be established upon a sure footing, then a series of events, which should be contrary to these, would have a strong presumption against them. And yet it becomes us to be very diffident here also. God is infinite, and we finite : we may therefore, from seeing only a small portion, judge what we see to be different from what it is. However, revealed religion has no occasion in general for any such apology. Natural and revealed religion, the word and works of God, are in all principal things most wonderfully analogous ; as has been sufficiently shewn by the advocates for revealed religion, and most especially by bishop Butler in his *Analogy*. As far therefore as moral analogy carries weight, there is positive evidence for the scripture miracles. And our comprehension of natural analogy is so imperfect, as scarce to afford any presumption against them ; but leaves the evidence in their favour, of nearly the same strength as it would have had for other facts.

Thirdly, Let it be observed, that the evidences for the scripture miracles are so numerous, and, in other respects, so strong, as to be nearly equal to any evidences that can be brought for the most common facts. For it is

very manifest, as has been observed before, that a great number of credible evidences make a sum total, that is equal to unity, or absolute certainty, as this has been considered in the foregoing part of this work, nearer than by any perceptible difference : and the greatest number can never arrive quite to unity. The evidence therefore for common facts cannot exceed that for the scripture miracles by more than an imperceptible difference, if we estimate evidences according to the truest and most accurate manner. Hence the nearly equal evidences for each must establish each in nearly an equal degree, unless we suppose either some such inconsistency between them, as that, common facts being allowed, the scripture miracles must be absolutely rejected, or that there is some evidence against the scripture miracles, which may be put in competition with that for them ; neither of which things can be said with any colour of reason.

Fourthly, This whole matter may be put in another, and perhaps a more natural, as well as a more philosophical light ; and that especially if the foregoing account of the mind be allowed. Association, *i. e.* analogy, perfect and imperfect, is the only foundation upon which we in fact do, or can, or ought to assent ; and consequently a dissonance from analogy, or a repugnancy thereto, is a necessary foundation for dissent. Now it happens sometimes, that the same thing is supported and impugned by different



analogies ; or, if we put repugnance to analogy as equivalent to miracle, that both a fact and its non-existence imply a miracle ; or, since this cannot be, that that side alone, which is repugnant to the most and the most perfect analogies, is miraculous, and therefore incredible. Let us weigh the scripture miracles in this scale. Now the progress of the human mind, as may be seen by all the inquiries into it, and particularly by the history of association, is a thing of a determinate nature ; a man's thoughts, words, and actions, are all generated by something previous ; there is an established course for these things, an analogy, of which every man is a judge from what he feels in himself, and sees in others : and to suppose any number of men in determinate circumstances to vary from this general tenor of human nature in like circumstances, is a miracle, and may be made a miracle of any magnitude, *i. e.* incredible to any degree, by increasing the number and magnitude of the deviations. It is therefore a miracle in the human mind, as great as any can be conceived in the human body, to suppose that infinite multitudes of christians, jews, and heathens in the primitive times, should have borne such unquestionable testimony, some expressly, and others by indirect circumstances, as history informs us they did, to the miracles said to be performed by Christ and his apostles upon the human body, unless they were really performed. In like manner, the reception which the miracles re-



corded in the Old Testament met with, is a miracle, unless those miracles were true. Thus also the very existence of the books of the Old and New Testaments, of the jewish and christian religions, &c. &c. are miracles, as is abundantly shewn by the advocates for christianity, unless we allow the scripture miracles. Here then a man must either deny all analogy and association, and become an absolute sceptick, or acknowledge that very strong analogies may sometimes be violated, *i. e.* he must have recourse to something miraculous, to something supernatural, according to his narrow views. The next question then will be, which of the two opposite miracles will agree best with all his other notions ; whether it be more analogous to the nature of God, providence, the allowed history of the world, the known progress of man in this life, &c. &c. to suppose that God imparted to certain select persons, of eminent piety, the power of working miracles ; or to suppose that he confounded the understandings, affections, and whole train of associations, of entire nations, so as that men, who, in all other things, seem to have been conducted in a manner like all other men, should, in respect of the history of Christ, the prophets and apostles, act in a manner repugnant to all our ideas and experiences. Now, as this last supposition cannot be maintained at all upon the footing of deism, so it would be but just as probable as the first, even though the objector should deny the

possibility of the being of a God. For the least presumption, that there may be a being of immense or infinite power, knowledge, and goodness, immediately turns the scale in favour of the first supposition.

Fifthly, It is to be considered, that the evidences for the scripture miracles are many, and most of them independent upon one another, whereas the dispensation itself is a connected thing, and the miracles remarkably related to each other. If therefore only so much as one miracle could be proved to have been really wrought in confirmation of the jewish or christian revelations, there would be less objection to the supposition of a second; and, if this be proved, still less to that of a third, &c. till at last the reluctance to receive them would quite vanish (which indeed appears to have been the case in the latter part of the primitive times, when the incontestible evidences for the christian miracles had been so much examined and considered, as quite to overcome this reluctance; and it seems difficult to account for the credulity in receiving false miracles, which then appeared, but upon supposition, that many true ones had been wrought). But it is not so with the evidences. The greatest part of these have so little dependence on the rest, as may be seen even from this chapter, that they must be set aside separately by the objector. Here it ought to be added, that the objectors have scarce ever attempted to set aside any part of the evidence,

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and never succeeded in such an attempt ; which is of itself a strong argument in favour of the scriptures, since this is plainly the most natural and easy way of disproving a thing that is false. It ought also to be observed here, that the accomplishment of prophecy, by implying a miracle, does in like manner overbear the reluctance to receive miracles. So that if any considerable events, which have already happened in the world, can be proved to have been foretold in scripture in a manner exceeding chance and human foresight, the objection to miracles, considered in this proposition, falls to the ground at once.

Sixthly, If any one should affirm or think, as some persons seem to do, that a miracle is impossible, let him consider, that this is denying God's omnipotence, and even maintaining, that man is the supreme agent in the universe.

THE HISTORICAL EVIDENCES FOR THE GENUINENESS,  
TRUTH, AND DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES DO NOT GROW LESS FROM AGE TO AGE ; BUT, ON THE CONTRARY, IT MAY RATHER BE PRESUMED, THAT THEY INCREASE.

It is sometimes alleged as an indirect objection to the christian religion, that the evidence for facts done in former times, and at remote places, decreases with the distance of time and place ; and consequently that a time may come



hereafter, when the evidence for the christian religion will be so inconsiderable as not to claim our assent, even allowing that it does so now. To this I answer,

First, That printing has so far secured all considerable monuments of antiquity, as that no ordinary calamities of wars, dissolutions of governments, &c. can destroy any material evidence now in being, or render it less probable, in any discernible degree, to those who shall live five hundred or a thousand years hence.

Secondly, That so many new evidences and coincidences have been discovered in favour of the jewish and christian histories, since the three great concurring events of printing, the reformation of religion in these western parts, and the restoration of letters, as, in some measure, to make up for the evidences lost in the preceding times ; and, since this improvement of the historical evidences is likely to continue, there is great reason to hope, that they will grow every day more and more irresistible to all candid, serious inquirers.

One might also allege, if it were needful, that our proper business is to weigh carefully the evidence which appears at present, leaving the care of future ages to Providence ; that the prophetic evidences are manifestly of an increasing nature, and so may compensate for a decrease in the historical ones ; and that though, in a gross way of speaking, the evidences for facts distant in time and place are weakened by

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this distance, yet they are not weakened in an exact proportion in any case, nor in any proportion in all cases. No one can think a fact relating to the Turkish empire less probable at London than at Paris, or at fifty years distance than at forty.

THE PROPHECIES DELIVERED IN THE SCRIPTURES PROVE THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES, EVEN PREVIOUSLY TO THE CONSIDERATION OF THE GENUINENESS OF THESE PROPHECIES ; BUT MUCH MORE, IF THAT BE ALLOWED.

IN order to evince this proposition, I will distinguish the prophecies into four kinds, and shew in what manner it holds in respect of each kind.

There are then contained in the scriptures,

First, Prophecies that relate to the state of the nations which bordered upon the land of Canaan.

Secondly, Those that relate to the political state of the Israelites and jews in all ages.

Thirdly, The types and prophecies that relate to the office, time of appearance, birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of the promised Messiah, or Christ.

Fourthly, The prophecies that relate to the state of the christian church, especially in the latter times, and to the second coming of Christ.

I begin with the prophecies of the first kind, or those which relate to the state of Amalek, Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, Syria, Egypt, Nineveh, Babylon, and the four great successive empires of the Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans. Now here I observe, First, That if we admit both the genuineness of these prophecies and the truth of the common history of the scriptures, the very remarkable coincidence of the facts with the prophecies will put their divine authority out of all doubt ; as I suppose every reader will acknowledge, upon recollecting the many particular prophecies of this kind, with their accomplishments, which occur in the Old Testament. Secondly, If we allow the genuineness of these prophecies, so great a part of them may be verified by the remains of ancient pagan history, as to establish the divine authority of that part. Thus, if Daniel's prophecies of the image, and four beasts, were written by him in the time of the Babylonian empire, if the prophecies concerning the fall of Nineveh, Babylon, Tyre, &c. be genuine, &c. even profane history will shew, that more than human foresight was concerned in the delivery of them. Thirdly, That such of these prophetic events as remain to this day, or were evidently posterior to the delivery of the prophecies, prove their divine authority even antecedently to the consideration of their genuineness, as is affirmed in the former part of the proposition. Of this kind are the perpetual

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slavery of Egypt ; the perpetual desolation of Tyre and Babylon ; the wild unconquered state of the Ishmaelites ; the great power and strength of the Roman empire beyond those of the three foregoing empires ; its division into ten kingdoms ; its not being subdued by any other, as the three foregoing were ; the rise of the Mahometan religion, and Saracenick empire ; the limited continuance of this empire ; and the rise and progress of the empire of the Turks. To these we may add the transactions that passed between the cotemporary kingdoms of Syria and Egypt, prophesied of in the eleventh chapter of Daniel. For, since these prophecies reach down to the times of Antiochus Epiphanes, and the beginning subjection of these kingdoms to the Roman power, they cannot but have been delivered prior to the events, as may appear both from the consideration of the Septuagint translation of the book of Daniel, and the extinction of the Biblical Hebrew as a living language before that time, even though the book of Daniel should not be considered as a genuine book ; for which suspicion there is, however, no foundation. Lastly, we may remark, that these and indeed all the other prophecies, have the same marks of genuineness, as the rest of the scriptures, or as any other books ; that they cannot be separated from the context without the utmost violence, so that, if this be allowed to be genuine, those must also ; that history and chronology were in so uncertain a state in an-

cient times, that the prophecies concerning foreign countries could not have been adapted to the facts, even after they had happened, with so much exactness as modern inquirers have shewn the scripture prophecies to be, by a learned nation, and much less by the jews, who were remarkably ignorant of what passed in foreign countries ; and that those prophecies, which are delivered in the manner of dream and vision, have a very strong internal evidence for their genuineness, taken from the nature of dreams, as this is explained in the foregoing part of this work.

I proceed, in the second place, to shew how the prophecies, that relate to the political state of the jews, prove the divine authority of the scriptures. And here, passing by many prophecies of inferiour note, and of a subordinate nature, we may confine ourselves to the promise, or prophecy, of the land of Canaan, given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ; to the prophecies concerning the captivity of the ten tribes, and the Babylonish captivity of the two tribes, with their return after seventy years ; and to those concerning the much greater captivity and desolation predicted to fall upon this chosen people in the twenty eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, in various places of the prophecies, and by Christ and his apostles in the New Testament. There was no natural probability, at the time when these prophecies were delivered, that any of these events should happen in the manner in

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which they were predicted, and have accordingly happened ; but, in some, the utmost improbability : so that it must appear to every candid intelligent inquirer, that nothing less than supernatural knowledge could have enabled those who delivered these predictions, to make them. The divine authority, therefore, of the books which contain these predictions, is unquestionable, provided we allow them to be genuine.

Now, besides the forementioned evidences of this, these prophecies have some peculiar ones attending them. Thus the mere departure of the Israelites out of Egypt, in order to go to the land of Canaan, their burying Jacob in Canaan, and carrying Joseph's bones with them, plainly imply that the promise of this land had been given to their ancestors. Thus also the prophecies relating to the captivities of Israel and Judah, and to their restorations, make so large a part of the old prophets, that, if they be not genuine, the whole books must be forged ; and the genuineness of those in the New Testament cannot but be allowed by all.

I come now, in the third place, to speak of the types and prophecies that relate to Christ, the time of his appearance, his offices, birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension. Many of these are applied to him by himself, and by the authors of the books of the New Testament ; but there are also many others, whose discovery and application are left to the sagacity



and industry of christians in all ages. This seems to be a field of great extent, and the evidences arising from it of an increasing nature. It is probable that the christians of the first ages were acquainted with so many more circumstances relating to the life, death, &c. of Christ, as on this account to be able to apply a larger number of types and prophecies to him than we can. But then this may perhaps be compensated to us by the daily opening of the scriptures, and our growing knowledge in the typical and prophetical nature of them. What is already discovered of this kind, seems no ways possible to be accounted for, but from the supposition, that God, by his power and foreknowledge, so ordered the actions, history, ceremonies, &c. of the patriarchs and jews, and the language of the prophets, as to make them correspond with Christ, his offices, actions, and sufferings. If any one doubts of this, let him attempt to apply the types and prophecies to any other person. I will just mention four classes, into which these types and prophecies may be distinguished, and under each of them a few remarkable instances. There are then,

First, Prophecies which evidently relate to Christ, and either to him alone, or to others in an inferiour degree only. Such are that of Jacob concerning Shiloh, of Moses concerning a great prophet and law-giver that should come after him, of Isaiah in his fifty-second and fifty-third chapters of Daniel, concerning the Messiah,

many in almost all the prophets concerning a great prince, a prince of the house of David, &c. who shall make a new covenant with his people, &c. &c.

Secondly, The typical circumstances in the lives of eminent persons, as of Isaac, Joseph, Joshua, David, Solomon, Jonah ; and in the common history of the Jewish people, as its being called out of Egypt.

Thirdly, Typical ceremonies in the Jewish worship, as their sacrifices in general, those of the passover and day of expiation in particular, &c. To this head we may also refer the typical nature of the high priesthood, and of the offices of king, priest and prophet, amongst the Jews, &c.

Fourthly, The apparently incidental mention of many circumstances in these things, which yet agree so exactly, and in a way so much above chance, with Christ, as to make it evident, that they were originally intended to be applied to him. The not breaking a bone of the Paschal Lamb ; the mention of renting the garment, and casting lots upon the vesture, by David ; of offering gall and vinegar, of looking on him whom they had pierced, of the third day upon numerous occasions, &c. are circumstances of this kind.

Now, these types and prophecies afford nearly the same evidence, whether we consider the books of the Old Testament as genuine, or no. For no one calls in question their being extant

as we now have them, small immaterial variations excepted, before the time of Christ's appearance. Many of them do indeed require the common history of the New Testament to be allowed as true. But there are some, those, for instance, which relate to the humiliation and death of Christ, and the spirituality of his office, the proofs of whose accomplishment are sufficiently evident to the whole world, even independently of this.

The fourth branch of the prophetical evidences are those which relate to the christian church. Here the three following particulars deserve attentive consideration.

First, The predictions concerning a new and pure religion, which was to be set up by the coming of the promised Messiah.

Secondly, A great and general corruption of this religion, which was to follow in after-times.

Thirdly, The recovery of the christian church from this corruption, by great tribulations; and the final establishment of true and pure religion, called 'the kingdom of righteousness, of the saints, the new Jerusalem, &c.'

The predictions of the first and third kinds abound every where in the old prophets, in the discourses of Christ, and in the writings of the apostles. Those of the second kind are chiefly remarkable in Daniel, the Revelation, and the epistles of St. Paul, St. Peter, St. John, and St. Jude. In how surprising a manner the events of the first and second kind have answer-



ed to the predictions, cannot be unknown to any inquisitive serious person, in any christian country. At the same time it is evident, that the prediction of these things could have no foundation in probable conjectures when they were given. The events of the third class have not yet received their accomplishment; but there have been for some centuries past, and are still, perpetual advances and preparations made for them; and it now seems unreasonable to doubt of the natural probability of their accomplishment, unless we doubt at the same time of the truth of the religion itself. If it be true, it must, upon more diligent and impartial examination, both purify itself, and overcome all opposition.

And it is remarkably agreeable to the tenor of Providence in other things, that that accomplishment of prophecy, which will hereafter evidence the truth of the christian religion in the most illustrious manner, should be effected by present evidences of a less illustrious nature.

Let me add here, that many of the psalms are peculiarly applicable to the restoration and conversion of the jews, and to the final prevalence and establishment of the christian church, *i. e.* to the events of the third class.

THE DEGREE OF OBSCURITY WHICH IS FOUND IN THE PROPHECIES OF THE SCRIPTURES, IS NOT SO GREAT AS TO INVALIDATE THE FOREGOING EVIDENCES FOR THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY ; BUT, ON THE CONTRARY, IS ITSELF AN INDIRECT TESTIMONY IN THEIR FAVOUR.

IN order to prove this proposition, I observe, First, That there are a sufficient number of prophecies, whose interpretation is certain, clear, and precise, to shew that their agreement with the events predicted is far above the powers of chance, or human foresight. But for the proof of this point which takes in a great compass of literature, I must refer to the authors who have treated it in detail. And as those who have examined this point with accuracy and impartiality, do, as I presume, universally agree to the position here laid down, so those who have not done so, can have no pretence for asserting the contrary ; this being an historical matter, which is to be determined as others of a like kind, viz. by the historical evidences. The reader may, however, form some judgment, in the gross, even from the few instances, which are alleged under the last proposition.

Secondly, That, even in the types and prophecies where interpreters differ from each other, the differences are often so inconsiderable, and the agreements so general, or else the prophecy so suited to the several events, to which

it is applied by different interpreters, as to exclude both chance, and human foresight, *i. e.* to infer a divine communication. This point requires also a careful and candid examination, and then, I think, cannot but be determined in the affirmative ; especially when the very great number of types and prophecies is taken into consideration. Fitness in numerous instances is always an evidence of design ; this is a method of reasoning allowed, explicitly or implicitly, by all. And though the fitness may not be perfectly evident or precise in all, yet, if it be general, and the instances very numerous, the evidence of design, arising from it, may amount to any degree, and fall short of certainty by an imperceptible difference only. And indeed it is upon these principles alone, that we prove the divine power, knowledge, and goodness, from the harmonies, and mutual fitnesses, of visible things, and from final causes, inasmuch as these harmonies and fitnesses are precisely made out only in a few instances, if compared to those in which we see no more than general harmonies, with particular subordinate difficulties, and apparent incongruities. That the reader may see in a stronger light, how fully the fitnesses, considered in the two foregoing paragraphs, exclude chance, and infer design, let him try to apply the types and prophecies of the four classes before-mentioned to other persons and events besides those, to which christian interpreters have applied them ; and especially let him con-



sider the types and prophecies relating to Christ. If design be excluded, these ought to be equally, or nearly so applicable to other persons and events ; which yet, I think, no serious considerate person can affirm. Now, if chance be once excluded, and the necessity of having recourse to design admitted, we shall be instantly compelled to acknowledge a contrivance greater than human, from the long distances of time intervening between the prophecy and the event, with other such like reasons.

Thirdly, I observe that those types and prophecies, whose interpretation is so obscure, that interpreters have not been able to discover any probable application, cannot any ways invalidate the evidence arising from the rest. They are analogous to those parts of the works of nature, whose uses, and subserviency to the rest are not yet understood. And as no one calls in question the evidences of design, which appear in many parts of the human body, because the uses of others are not yet known ; so the interpretations of prophecy, which are clearly or probably made out, remain the same evidence of design, notwithstanding that insurmountable difficulties may hitherto attend many other parts of the prophetick writings.

Fourthly, It is predicted in the prophecies, that in the latter times great multitudes will be converted to the christian faith ; whereas those who preach or prophecy, during the great apostacy, shall be able to do this only in an obscure,

imperfect manner, and convert but few. Now the past and present obscurity of prophecy agrees remarkably with this prediction ; and the opening, which is already made, since the revival of letters, in applying the prophecies to the events, seems to presage, that the latter times are now approaching ; and that by the more full discovery of the true meaning of the prophetick writings, and of their aptness to signify the events predicted, there will be such an accession of evidence to the divine authority of the scriptures, as none but the wilfully ignorant, the profligate, and the obdurate, can withstand. It is therefore a confirmation of the prophetick writings, that, by the obscurity of one part of them, a way should be prepared for effecting that glorious conversion of all nations, which is predicted in others, in the time and manner in which it is predicted.

IT IS NO OBJECTION TO THE FOREGOING EVIDENCES TAKEN FROM THE TYPES AND PROPHECIES, THAT THEY HAVE DOUBLE, OR EVEN MANIFOLD, USES AND APPLICATIONS ; BUT RATHER A CONFIRMATION OF THEM.

For the foregoing evidences all rest upon this foundation, viz. that there is an aptness in the types and prophecies to prefigure the events, greater than can be supposed to result from chance, or human foresight. When this is evi-

dently made out from the great number of the types and prophecies, and the degree of clearness and preciseness of each, the shewing afterwards, that these have other uses and applications, will rather prove the divine interposition, than exclude it. All the works of God, the parts of a human body, systems of minerals, plants, and animals, elementary bodies, planets, fixed stars, &c. have various uses and subserviencies, in respect of each other : and, if the scriptures be the word of God, analogy would lead one to expect something corresponding hereto in them. When men form designs, they are indeed obliged to have one thing principally in view, and to sacrifice subordinate matters to principal ones ; but we must not carry this prejudice, taken from the narrow limits of our power and knowledge, to him who is infinite in them. All his ends centre in the same point, and are carried to their utmost perfection by one and the same means. Those laws, ceremonies, and incidents, which best suited the jewish state, and the several individuals of it, were also most apt to prefigure the promised Messiah, and the state of the christian church, according to the perfect plan of these things, which, in our way of speaking, existed in the divine mind from all eternity ; just as that magnitude, situation, &c. of our earth, which best suits its present inhabitants, is also best suited to all the changes which it must hereafter undergo, and



to all the inhabitants of other planets, if there be any such, to whom its influence extends.

The following instance may perhaps make this matter more clearly understood. Suppose a person to have ten numbers, and as many lines, presented to his view ; and to find by mensuration, that the ten numbers expressed the lengths of the ten lines respectively. This would make it evident, that they were intended to do so. Nor would it alter the case, and prove that the agreement between the numbers and lines arose, without design, and by chance, as we express it, to allege that these numbers had some other relations ; that, for instance, they proceeded in arithmetical or geometrical progression, were the squares or cubes of other numbers, &c. On the contrary, any such remarkable property would rather increase than diminish the evidence of design in the agreement between the numbers and lines. However, the chief thing to be inquired into would plainly be, whether the agreement be too great to be accounted for by chance. If it be, design must be admitted.

THE APPLICATION OF THE TYPES AND PROPHECIES  
OF THE OLD TESTAMENT BY THE WRITERS OF  
THE NEW DOES NOT WEAKEN THE AUTHORITY OF  
THESE WRITERS, BUT RATHER CONFIRM IT.

FOR the objections, which have been made to the writers of the New Testament on this head, have been grounded principally upon a supposition, that when an obvious literal sense of a passage, or a manifest use of a ceremony, suited to the then present times, are discovered, all others are excluded, so as to become misapplications. But this has been shewn in the last proposition to be a prejudice arising from the narrowness of our faculties and abilities. Whence it follows, that, if the scripture types and prophecies be remarkably suited to different things, which is a point that is abundantly proved by learned men, they cannot but, in their original design, have various senses and uses. And it is some confirmation of the divine authority of the writers of the New Testament, that they write agreeably to this original design of God.

It may perhaps afford some satisfaction to the reader to make some conjectures concerning the light in which the types and prophecies, which have double senses, would appear first to the ancient jews, and then to those who lived in the time of our Saviour. From hence we

may judge in what light it is reasonable they should be taken by us.

Let our instance be the second psalm, which we are to suppose written by David himself, or, at least, in the time of his reign. It is evident, that there are so many things in this psalm peculiarly applicable to David's ascent to the throne by God's special appointment, to the opposition which he met with both in his own nation, and from the neighbouring ones, and to his victories over all his opposers through the favour of God, that the jews of that time could not but consider this psalm as relating to David. Nay, one can scarce doubt, but the psalmist himself, whether he seemed to himself to compose it from his own proper fund, or to have it dictated immediately by the spirit of God, would have David principally in view. At the same time it is evident, that there are some passages, particularly the last, 'Blessed are all they that put their trust in him,' *i. e.* in the Son, which it would be impious, especially for an Israelite, to apply to David, and which therefore no allowance for the sublimity of the eastern poetry could make applicable. It may be supposed therefore, that many, or most, considered such passages as having an obscurity in them, into which they could no ways penetrate; whereas a few perhaps, who were peculiarly enlightened by God, and who meditated day and night upon the promises made to their ancestors, particularly upon those to Abraham, would



presume or conjecture, that a future person of a much higher rank than David, was prefigured thereby. And the case would be the same in regard to many other psalms: they would appear to the persons of the then present times both to respect the then present occurrences, and also to imitate some future more glorious ones; and would mutually support this latter interpretation in each other.

When the prophets appeared in the declension and captivities of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, the same interpretation would be strengthened, and the expectations grounded thereon increased, by the plainer and more frequent declarations of the prophets concerning such a future person, and the happiness which would attend his coming. The great and various sufferings of this chosen people, their return and deliverance, their having their scriptures collected into one view by Ezra, and read in their synagogues during the interval from Ezra to Christ, the figurative senses put upon dreams, visions, and parables, in their scriptures, &c. would all concur to the same purpose, till at last it is reasonable to expect that the jews in our saviour's time would consider many of the institutions and ceremonies of their law, of the historical events, of the psalms appointed for the temple-worship, and of the inspired declarations of the prophets, as respecting the future times of the Messiah; and this, in some cases, to the exclusion of the more ob-

vious senses and uses, which had already taken place; being led thereto by the same narrow-mindedness, which makes some in these days reject the typical and more remote sense, as soon as they see the literal and more immediate one. Now, that this was, in fact, the case of the jews in the time of Christ, and for some time afterwards, appears from the New Testament, from the christian writers of the first ages, and from the Talmudical ones.

A great part, however, of the scripture types and prophecies appeared to the jews to have no relation to their promised Messiah, till they were interpreted by the event. They expected a person that should correspond to David and Solomon, two glorious princes; but they did not see how Isaac, or the paschal lamb, should typify him; or that the circumstance of being called out of Egypt, the appellation of Nazarene, or the parting garments, and casting lots upon a vesture, should contribute to ascertain him. However, it is certain, that to persons who had for some time considered their scriptures in the typical, prophetical view, mentioned in the last paragraph, every remarkable circumstance and coincidence of this kind, verified by the event, would be a new accession of evidence, provided we suppose a good foundation from miracles, or prophecies of undoubted import, to have been laid previously. Nay, such coincidences may be considered not only as arguments to the jews of Christ's time, but as



solid arguments in themselves, and that exclusively of the context. For though each of these coincidences, singly taken, affords only a low degree of evidence, and some of them scarce any, yet it is a thing not to be accounted for from chance, that separate passages of the Old Testament should be applicable to the circumstances of Christ's life, by an allusion either of words or sense, in ten or an hundred times a greater number, than to any other persons, from mere accident. And this holds in a much higher degree, if the separate passages or circumstances be subordinate parts of a general type. Thus the parting the garments, the offering vinegar and gall, and the not breaking a bone, have much more weight, when it is considered that David and the paschal lamb are types of the Messiah. And when the whole evidence of this kind which the industry of pious christians has brought to light in the first ages of christianity, and again since the revival of letters, is laid together, it appears to me to be both a full proof of the truth of the christian religion, and a vindication of the method of arguing from typical and double senses.

It may be added in favour of typical reasoning, that it corresponds to the method of reasoning by analogy, which is found to be of such extensive use in philosophy. A type is indeed nothing but an analogy, and the scripture types are not only a key to the scriptures, but seem also to have contributed to put into our hands

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the key of nature, analogy. And this shews us a new correspondence or analogy between the word and works of God. However, since certain well-meaning persons seem to be prejudiced against typical and double senses, I will add some arguments, whereby the writers of the New Testament may be defended upon this footing also.

First, then, Since the jews in the times of the writers of the New Testament, and consequently these writers themselves, were much given to typical reasonings, and the application of passages of the Old Testament in a secondary sense to the times of the Messiah, this would be a common foundation for these writers, and those to whom they wrote, to proceed upon, derived from association, and the acquired nature of their minds. And it is easy to conceive, that God would permit them to proceed upon this foundation for the then present time, though it would not extend to the world in general, to distant ages, and to persons of different educations, as that they should be left to the workings of their own acquired natures in many other respects, notwithstanding the supernatural gifts bestowed upon them in some ; or as it is to conceive, that God should confer any thing, existence, happiness, &c. in any particular manner or degree.

Secondly, There are some passages in the New Testament quoted from the Old in the way of mere allusion. This cannot, I think,

be true of many, where the passage is said to be fulfilled, without doing violence to the natural sense of the words, and of the context, in the New Testament : however, where it is, it entirely removes the objection here considered.

Thirdly, If we should allow, that the writers of the New Testament were sometimes guilty of erroneous reasonings in these or other matters, still this does not affect their moral characters at all ; nor their intellectual ones, which are so manifest from the general soundness and strength of their other reasonings, in any such manner as to be of importance in respect of the evidence for the general truth of the scriptures, or for their divine authority in the first and lowest sense above considered.

THE MORAL CHARACTERS OF CHRIST, THE PROPHETS AND APOSTLES, PROVE THE TRUTH AND DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

LET us begin with the consideration of the character of Christ. This, as it may be collected from the plain narrations of the gospels, is manifestly superiour to all other characters, fictitious or real, whether drawn by historians, orators, or poets. We see in it the most entire devotion and resignation to God, and the most ardent and universal love to mankind, joined with the greatest humility, self-denial, meekness, patience, prudence, and every other virtue, di-

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vine and human. To which we are to add, that, according to the New Testament, Christ, being the lord and creator of all, took upon himself the form of a servant, in order to save all; that, with this view, he submitted to the helplessness and infirmities of infancy, to the narrowness of human understanding, and the perturbations of human affections, to hunger, thirst, labour, weariness, poverty, and hardships of various kinds, to lead a sorrowful, friendless life, to be misunderstood, betrayed, insulted, and mocked, and at last to be put to a painful and ignominious death; also (which deserves our most serious consideration, however incongruous to our narrow apprehensions it may appear at first sight) to undergo the most bitter mental agony previously. Here then we may make the following observations.

First, That, laying down the present disorders of the moral world, and the necessity of the love of God and our neighbour, and of self-annihilation, in order to the pure and ultimate happiness of man, there seems to be a necessity also for a suffering saviour. At least, one may affirm, that the condescension of Christ, in leaving the glory which he had with the Father before the foundation of the world, and in shewing himself a perfect pattern of obedience to the will of God, both in doing and suffering, has a most peculiar tendency to rectify the present moral depravity of our natures, and to exalt us thereby to pure spiritual happiness. Now



it is remarkable, that the evangelists and apostles should have thus hit upon a thing, which all the great men amongst the ancient heathens missed, and which however clear it does and ought now to appear to us, was a great stumbling block to them, as well as to the jews; the first seeking after wisdom, *i. e.* human philosophy and eloquence; and the last requiring a sign, or a glorious temporal saviour. Nor can this be accounted for, as it seems to me, but by admitting the reality of the character, *i. e.* the divine mission of Christ, and the consequent divine inspiration of those who drew it, *i. e.* the truth and divine authority of the New Testament.

Secondly, If we allow only the truth of the common history of the New Testament, or even, without having recourse to it, only such a part of the character of Christ, as neither ancient nor modern jews, heathens, or unbelievers, seem to contest, it will be difficult to reconcile so great a character, claiming divine authority, either with the moral attributes of God, or indeed with itself, upon the supposition of the falsehood of that claim. One can scarce suppose, that God would permit a person apparently so innocent and excellent, so qualified to impose upon mankind, to make so impious and audacious a claim without having some evident mark of imposture set upon him; nor can it be conceived, how a person could be apparently so innocent, and excellent, and yet really otherwise.

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Thirdly, The manner in which the evangelists speak of Christ, shews that they drew after a real copy, *i. e.* shews the genuineness and truth of the gospel history. There are no direct encomiums upon him, no laboured defences or recommendations. His character arises from a careful impartial examination of all that he said and did, and the evangelists appear to have drawn this greatest of all characters without any direct design to do it. Nay, they have recorded some things, such as his being moved with the passions of human nature, as well as being affected by its infirmities, which the wisdom of this world would rather have concealed. But their view was to shew him to the persons to whom they preached as the promised Messiah of the jews, and saviour of mankind; and as they had been convinced of this themselves from his discourses, actions, sufferings, and resurrection, they thought nothing more was wanting to convince such others as were serious and impartial, but a simple narrative of what Jesus said and did. And if we compare the transcendent greatness of this character with the indirect manner in which it was delivered, and the illiterateness and low condition of the evangelists, it will appear impossible they should have forged it, that they should not have had a real original before them, so that nothing was wanting but to record simply and faithfully. How could mean and illiterate persons excel the greatest geniuses, ancient and modern, in

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drawing a character? How came they to draw it in an indirect manner? This is indeed a strong evidence of genuineness and truth; but then it is of so recluse and subtile a nature, and agreeably to this, has been so little taken notice of by the defenders of the christian religion, that one cannot conceive the evangelists were at all aware, that it was an evidence. The character of Christ, as drawn by them, is therefore genuine and true; and consequently proves his divine mission both by its transcendent excellence, and by his laying claim to such a mission.

Here it ought to be particularly remarked, that our saviour's entire devotion to God, and sufferings for the sake of men in compliance with his will, is a pitch of perfection, which was never proposed, or thought of, before his coming (much less attempted or attained); unless as far as this is virtually included in the precepts for loving God above all, and our neighbour as ourselves, and other equivalent passages in the Old Testament.

We come, in the next place, to consider the characters of the prophets, apostles, and other eminent persons mentioned in the Old and New-Testaments. Here then we may observe,

First, That the characters of the persons who are said in the scriptures to have had divine communications, and a divine mission, are so much superiour to the characters which occur in common life, that we can scarce account for the

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more eminent single ones, and therefore much less for so large a succession of them, continued through so many ages, without allowing the divine communications and assistance, which they allege. It is true indeed, that many of these eminent persons had considerable imperfections, and some of them were guilty of great sins occasionally, though not habitually. However, I speak here of the balance, after proper deductions are made, on account of these sins and imperfections ; and leave it to the impartial reader to consider, whether the prophets, apostles, &c. were not so much superiour, not only to mankind at an average, but even to the best men among the Greeks and Romans, as is not fairly to be accounted for by the mere powers of human nature.

Secondly, If this should be doubted, their characters are, however, far too good to allow the supposition of an impious fraud and imposture ; which must be the case, if they had not divine authority. We have therefore this double argument for the divine authority of the scriptures, if we only allow the genuineness and truth of its common history.

Thirdly, The characters of the eminent persons mentioned in the scriptures arise so much, in an indirect way, from the plain narrations of facts, their sins and imperfections are so fully set forth by themselves, or their friends, with their condemnation and punishment, and the vices of wicked men, and the opposers of God

and themselves, related in so candid a way, with all fit allowances, that we have in this a remarkable additional evidence for the truth of this part of the scripture history, besides the common ones before given, which extend to the whole.

Fourthly, The eminent persons here considered are sometimes charged by unbelievers with crimes, where, all circumstances being duly weighed, they did nothing unjustifiable, nothing more than it was their indispensable duty to God to do; as Abraham in preparing to sacrifice Isaac; Joshua in destroying the Canaanites, &c. We cannot determine an action to be sinful from a mere, abstracted, general definition of it, as that it is the taking away the life of a man, &c. but must carefully weigh all circumstances. And indeed there are no maxims in morality that are quite universal; they can be no more than general; and it is sufficient for human purposes, that they are so much, notwithstanding that the addition of peculiar circumstances makes the action vary from the general rule. Now the certain command of God may surely be such a circumstance.

Lastly, The perfection of virtue being of an ever-growing infinite nature, it is reasonable to expect, that mankind in its infant state, soon after the flood, and so onwards for some time, should be more imperfect, and have less of the pure and sublime precepts concerning indifference to this world, and all present things, uni-

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versal unlimited charity, mortification, abstinence, charity, &c. delivered to them, than we christians have, and less expected from them. And yet, upon the whole, the patriarchs and eminent persons among the jews were 'burning and shining lights' in their respective generations. However, it is also to be observed here, that the most sublime precepts of the gospel do appear from the first in the Old Testament, though under a veil ; and that they were gradually opened more and more under the latter prophets.

THE EXCELLENCE OF THE DOCTRINE CONTAINED IN  
THE SCRIPTURES IS AN EVIDENCE OF THEIR DI-  
VINE AUTHORITY.

THIS is an argument which has great force, independently of other considerations. Thus let us suppose, that the author of the gospel which goes under St. Matthew's name, was not known ; and that it was unsupported by the writers of the primitive times ; yet such is the unaffected simplicity of the narrations, the purity of the doctrines, and the sincere piety and goodness of the sentiments, that it carries its own authority with it. And the same thing may be said in general of all the books of the Old and New Testaments : so that it seems evident to me, that, if there was no other book in the world besides the bible, a man could not



reasonably doubt of the truth of revealed religion. 'The mouth speaks from the abundance of the heart.' Men's writings and discourses must receive a tincture from their real thoughts, desires, and designs. It is impossible to play the hypocrite in every word and expression. This is a matter of common daily observation, that cannot be called in question ; and the more any one thinks upon it, or attends to what passes in himself or others, to the history of the human thoughts, words, and actions, and their necessary mutual connections, *i. e.* to the history of association, the more clearly will he see it. We may conclude therefore, even if all other arguments were set aside, that the authors of the books of the Old and New Testaments, whoever they were, cannot have made a false claim to divine authority.

But there is also another method of inferring the divine authority of the scriptures from the excellence of the doctrine contained therein. For the scriptures contain doctrines concerning God, providence, a future state, the duty of man, &c. far more pure and sublime than can any ways be accounted for from the natural powers of men, so circumstanced as the sacred writers were. That the reader may see this in a clearer light, let him compare the several books of the Old and New Testaments with the cotemporary writers amongst the Greeks and Romans, who could not have less than the natural powers of the human mind ; but might

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have, over and above, some traditional hints derived ultimately from revelation. Let him consider whether it be possible to suppose, that jewish shepherds, fishermen, &c. should, both before and after the rise of the heathen philosophy, so far exceed the men of the greatest abilities and accomplishments in other nations by any other means, than divine communications. Nay, we may say, that no writers, from the invention of letters to the present-times, are equal to the penmen of the books of the Old and New Testaments in true excellence, utility, and dignity; which is surely such an internal criterion of their divine authority, as ought not to be resisted. And perhaps it never is resisted by any, who have duly considered these books, and formed their affections and actions according to the precepts therein delivered.

An objection is sometimes made against the excellence of the doctrines of the scriptures, by charging upon them erroneous doctrines, established by the authority of creeds, councils, and particular churches. But this is a manner of proceeding highly unreasonable. The unbeliever, who pays so little regard to the opinions of others, as to reject what all churches receive, the divine mission of Christ, and the evidences for the truth of the scriptures, ought not at other times to suppose the churches, much less any particular one, better able to judge of the doctrine; but should in the latter case, as well as the first, examine for himself; or if

he will take the doctrine upon trust, he ought much rather to take the evidence so.

If it can be shewn, either that the true doctrine of the scriptures differs from that which is commonly received, or that reason teaches something different from what is commonly supposed, or lastly that we are insufficient judges what are the real doctrines of scripture, or reason, or both, and consequently that we ought to wait with patience for farther light, all objections of this kind fall to the ground. One may also add, that the same arguments which prove a doctrine to be very absurd, prove also, for the most part, that it is not the sense of the passage; and that this is a method of reasoning always allowed in interpreting profane authors.

THE MANY AND GREAT ADVANTAGES WHICH HAVE ACCRUED TO THE WORLD FROM THE PATRIARCHAL, JUDAICAL, AND CHRISTIAN REVELATIONS, PROVE THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

THESE advantages are of two sorts, relating respectively to the knowledge and practice of religion. I begin with the first.

Now it is very evident that the christian revelation has diffused a much more pure and perfect knowledge of what is called natural religion, over a great part of the world, viz. wherever the profession either of christianity or



mahometism prevails. And the same thing will appear, in respect of the judaical and patriarchal revelations, to those who are acquainted with ancient history. It will be found very difficult by such persons, to account even for the pagan religions without recurring to such patriarchal communications with God, as are mentioned in the Pentateuch, and to the more full revelations made to the jews. So that one is led to believe, that all that is good in any pagan or false religion, is of divine original; all that is erroneous and corrupt, the offspring of the vanity, weakness, and wickedness of men; and that, properly speaking, we have no reason from history to suppose, that there ever was any such thing as mere natural religion, *i. e.* any true religion, which men discovered to themselves by the mere light of nature. These positions seem to follow from inquiries into the antiquities of the heathen world, and of their religions. The heathen religions all appear to be of a derivative nature; each circumstance in the inquiry confirms the scriptural accounts of things, and sends us to the revelations expressly mentioned, or indirectly implied, in the Old Testament, for the real original of the pagan religions in their simple state. This opinion receives great light and confirmation from Sir Isaac Newton's Chronology.

It appears also very probable to me, that a careful examination of the powers of human understanding would confirm the same position:

and that, admitting the novelty of the present world, there is no way of accounting for the rise and progress of religious knowledge, as it has taken place in fact, without having recourse to divine revelation. If we admit the patriarchal, judaical, and christian revelations, the progress of natural religion, and of all the false pretences to revelation, will fairly arise, (at least, appear possible in all cases, and probable in most) from the circumstances of things, and the powers of human nature ; and the foregoing doctrine of association will cast some light upon the subject. If we deny the truth of these revelations, and suppose the scriptures to be false, we shall cast utter confusion upon the inquiry, and human faculties will be found far unequal to the task assigned to them.

Secondly, If we consider the practice of true religion, the good effects of revelation are still more evident. Every man who believes, must find himself either excited to good, or deterred from evil, in many instances, by that belief ; notwithstanding that there may be many other instances, in which religious motives are too weak to restrain violent and corrupt inclinations. The same observations occur daily with regard to others, in various ways and degrees. And it is by no means conclusive against this obvious argument for the good effects of revelation upon the morals of mankind, to allege, that the world is not better now, than before the coming of Christ. This is a point which cannot be

determined by any kind of estimation, in our power to make ; and, if it could, we do not know what circumstances would have made the world much worse than it is, had not christianity interposed. However, it does appear to me very probable, to say the least, that jews and christians, notwithstanding all their vices and corruptions, have, upon the whole, been always better than heathens and unbelievers. It seems to me also, that as the knowledge of true, pure, and perfect religion is advanced and diffused more and more every day, so the practice of it corresponds thereto : but then this, from the nature of the thing, is a fact of a less obvious kind ; however, if it be true, it will become manifest in due time. Let us suppose a person to maintain, that civil government, the arts of life, medicines, &c. have never been of use to mankind, because it does not appear from any certain calculation, that the sum total of health and happiness is greater among the polite nations, than among the barbarous ones. Would it not be thought a sufficient answer to this, to appeal to the obvious good effects of these things in innumerable instances, without entering into a calculation impossible to be made ? However, it does here also appear, that as far as we are able to judge, civilized countries are, upon the whole, in a more happy state than barbarous ones, in all these respects.

Now, as the divine original of revelation may be directly concluded from its being the sole



fountain of all religious knowledge, if that can be proved ; so it will follow in an indirect way, if we suppose, that revelation has only promoted the knowledge and practice of true religion. It is not likely that folly or deceit of any kind should be eminently serviceable in the advancement of wisdom and virtue. Every tree must produce its proper fruit. Enthusiasm and imposture cannot contribute to make men prudent, peaceable and moderate, disinterested and sincere.

THE WONDERFUL NATURE, AND SUPERIOUR EXCELLENCE, OF THE ATTEMPT MADE BY CHRIST, AND HIS APOSTLES, ARE EVIDENCES OF THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY.

THIS attempt was that of reforming all mankind, and making them happy in a future state. And when we consider first the attempt itself and then the assurance of success in it, which appears in all their words and actions, by ways both direct and indirect, there arises, from thence alone, a strong presumption in their favour, as well as in favour of the authors of the books of the Old Testament, who have concurred in the same attempt, though less informed of the true nature and full extent of it. For ideas and purposes of this kind could scarce enter into the hearts of weak or wicked men ; much less could such persons enter upon and

prosecute so great an undertaking with such prudence, integrity, and constancy, or form such right judgments both of the opposition they should meet with, and of the prevalence of their own endeavours, and those of their successors, over this opposition. Nay, one may say, that nothing less than supernatural assistance could qualify them for these purposes. No design of this kind was ever formed or thought of, till the coming of Christ; and the pretences of enthusiasts and impostors to the same commission since, have all been copied from Christ, as being necessary to their succeeding in any measure, since his coming. If it be supposed to be the true interpretation and meaning of the scriptures, to publish final redemption, conversion, and salvation to all mankind, even the most wicked, in some distant future state, this will add great force to the present argument.

THE MANNER IN WHICH THE LOVE OF GOD, AND OF OUR NEIGHBOUR, IS TAUGHT AND INCULCATED IN THE SCRIPTURES, IS AN EVIDENCE OF THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY.

For it appears, that the scriptures do virtually include, or even expressly assert, all that the modern philosophy has discovered or verified concerning these important subjects; which degree of illumination, as it can with no plausibility

be accounted for in illiterate men in the time of Augustus from natural causes, so much less can it in the preceding times from Christ up to Moses. This proposition has been touched upon before ; however, the subject of it is of so much importance, as to deserve a separate place.

Here then, First, We may observe, that Moses commands the Israelites to love God with all the heart, and soul, and might, whereas they are to love their neighbours only as themselves. Now, though this infinite superiority of the love due to God over that due to our neighbour be perfectly agreeable to that infinite majesty and goodness of God, and nothingness of the creatures, which every new discovery in philosophy now opens to view ; yet it was so little known, many ages after Moses, amongst the wisest of the Greeks and Romans, that we cannot ascribe it to his mere natural sagacity. The natural equality of all men, and the self-annihilation, implied in the precept of loving all our brethren as well as ourselves, are also the genuine dictates of true philosophy.

Secondly, In order to shew the divine authority of the scriptures, from the manner in which the love of God is taught in them, we must consider not only the direct precepts concerning this love, but also all those concerning hope, trust, fear, thankfulness, delight, &c. for all these concur to inculcate, and beget in us the



love of God. The same may be said of all the scriptural descriptions of God, and his attributes, and of the addresses of good men to him, which are there recorded. God is declared in the scriptures to be light, love, goodness, the source of all happiness and perfection, the father and protector of all, &c. And the eminent persons who composed the Psalms, and other such like addresses to God, appear to have devoted themselves entirely to him. Now, when we reflect, that there is scarce any thing of this kind in the writings of the philosophers who preceded Christ, and nothing comparable to the scripture expressions even in those who came after him ; when we farther reflect, that the writings of the ablest and best men of the present times contain nothing excellent of the devotional kind, but what may be found in the scriptures, and even in the Old Testament ; there seems to be a necessity for having recourse to a divine inspiration, as the original source of this great degree of illumination in the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles.

Thirdly, Good persons are, in the scriptures, styled ' children of God ; members of Christ ; partakers of the divine nature ; one with God and Christ, as Christ is with God ; members of each other ; heirs of God, and coheirs with Christ ; heirs of all things,' &c. Expressions which have the strongest tendency to raise in us an unbounded love to God, and an equal one to our neighbour, and which include and convey the

most exalted, and at the same time the most solid, conceptions of this great system of things. And if we suppose, that these high titles and privileges are, according to the scriptures, to be hereafter extended to all mankind, the divine original of the scriptures will receive a new accession of evidence on this account.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE NECESSARY SUBSERVIENCY OF PAIN TO PLEASURE, UNFOLDED IN THE SCRIPTURES, IS AN EVIDENCE OF THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY.

THE scriptures give frequent and strong intimations, that the ultimate happiness which they promise, is not to be obtained in this our degenerate state, but by a previous passage through pain. 'Blessed are they that mourn. We must rejoice in tribulation. The palm-bearing multitude comes out of great tribulation. The captain of our salvation,' and therefore all his soldiers, must be 'made perfect through sufferings. Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. It is good for us to be afflicted, that we may learn to keep the commandments of God.' The jews must be captivated, and undergo the severest afflictions, before they can be made happy finally, as the people of God. 'Man must eat his bread in the sweat of his brow' all his life, 'and return to the dust' at last ; and yet still 'the seed of the



woman shall bruise the serpent's head,' and gain re-admission to 'the tree of life, whose leaves shall heal the nations,' &c. &c. Now there is a surprising correspondence between such expressions as these, and many modern discoveries, which shew that pain is, in general, introductory and subservient to pleasure; and particularly that such is the present frame of our natures, and constitution of the external world, which affects our organs, that we cannot be delivered from the sensuality and selfishness, that seize upon us at our first entrance into life, and advanced to spirituality and disinterestedness, to the love of God and our neighbour, we cannot have our wills broken, and our faculties exalted and purified, so as to relish happiness wherever we see it, but by the perpetual correction and reformation of our judgments and desires from painful impressions and associations. And all philosophical inquiries of this kind seem to cast a peculiar light and evidence upon the scripture expressions before-mentioned, and to make their accuracy, and congruity with experience, and observation, be much more plainly seen and felt.



THE MUTUAL INSTRUMENTALITY OF BEINGS TO EACH OTHER'S HAPPINESS AND MISERY, UNFOLDED IN THE SCRIPTURES, IS AN ARGUMENT OF THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY.

To this head is to be referred all that the scriptures deliver concerning good and evil angels ; Christ, the Lord of all, becoming the redeemer of all ; Adam's injuring all his posterity through his frailty ; Abraham's becoming the father of the faithful, and all nations being blessed through him ; the jews being the keepers of the oracles of God, and of the true religion ; tyrants being scourges in the hand of God ; the fulness of the gentiles being the occasion of the final restoration of the jews ; and, in general, the doctrine that God prepares and disposes of every thing so, as that nothing is for itself alone, but every person and nation has various relations to others, co-operates with them through Christ, who is the head, and through whom the ' whole body being fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, increaseth and edifieth itself in love, till all things, both in heaven and earth, arrive, in their several orders, to the ' measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.' Now whoever compares these scripture expressions and doctrines with the various mutual relations, subserviencies, and uses of the parts of the external world, heavenly bodies, meteors, ele-

ments, animals, plants, and minerals, to each other, cannot help seeing a wonderful analogy between the works of God and the scriptures, so wonderful as justly to entitle the last to the appellation of the word of God.

And thus we may perceive, that the scripture account of the fall of man, his redemption by Christ, and the influences exerted upon him by good and evil angels, is so far from affording an objection against the christian religion, that it is a considerable evidence for it, when viewed in a truly philosophical light. God works in every thing by means, by those which, according to our present language and short-sightedness, are termed bad and unfit, as well as by the good and evidently fit ones ; and all these means require a definite time, before they can accomplish their respective ends. This occurs to daily observation in the course and constitution of nature. And the scripture doctrines concerning the fall, the redemption by Christ, and the influences of good and evil angels, are only such intimations concerning the principal invisible means that lead man to his ultimate end, happiness, in being united to God, as accelerate him in his progress thither. According to the scriptures, Adam hurts all, through frailty ; Christ saves all, from his love and compassion to all ; evil angels tempt, through malice ; and good ones assist and defend, in obedience to the will of God, and his original and ultimate design of making all happy. These things are indeed clothed in a

considerable variety of expressions, suited to our present ways of acting, conceiving, and speaking (which ways are, however, all of divine original, God having taught mankind, in the patriarchal times, the language, as one may say, in which he spake to them then and afterwards); but these expressions can have no greater real import, than that of signifying to us the means made use of by God; he being, according to the scriptures, as well as reason, the one only real agent in all the transactions that relate to man, to angels, &c. And to object to the method of producing happiness by this or that means, because of the time required to accomplish the end, of the mixture of evil, &c. is to require, that all God's creatures should at once be created infinitely happy, or rather have existed so from all eternity, *i. e.* should be gods, and not creatures.

THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES MAY BE INFERRED FROM THE SUPERIOUR WISDOM OF THE JEWISH LAWS, CONSIDERED IN A POLITICAL LIGHT; AND FROM THE EXQUISITE WORKMANSHIP SHEWN IN THE TABERNACLE AND TEMPLE.

ALL these were originals amongst the jews, and some of them were copied partially and imperfectly by ancient heathen nations. They seem also to imply a knowledge superiour to the respective times. And I believe, that profane



history gives sufficient attestation to these positions. However, it is certain from scripture, that Moses received the whole body of his laws, also the pattern of the tabernacle, and David the pattern of the temple, from God ; and that Bezaleel was inspired by God for the workmanship of the tabernacle. Which things, being laid down as a sure foundation, may encourage learned men to inquire into the evidences from profane history, that the knowledge and skill to be found amongst the jews were superiour to those of other nations at the same period of time, *i. e.* were supernatural.

THE WANT OF UNIVERSALITY IN THE PUBLICATION OF REVEALED RELIGION IS NO OBJECTION TO IT ; BUT, ON THE CONTRARY, THE TIME AND MANNER, IN WHICH THE SCRIPTURES WERE WRITTEN, AND DELIVERED TO THE WORLD, ARE ARGUMENTS FOR THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY.

HERE I observe,

First, That objections of this kind ought never to be admitted against historical evidence ; and, in fact, are not, upon other subjects. It is evident, as was observed in the beginning of this tract, that to allow the truth of the scripture history, is to allow the truth of the christian religion. Now it is very foreign to the purpose of an inquiry into the truth of the scripture history, to allege that it has not been made known to all mankind, in all ages, and un-

der all circumstances of each individual. It must require much abstracted and subtle reasoning, and such as can never be put in competition with plain historical evidence, to connect this objection with the proposition objected to. This is therefore, at least, a strong presumption against the validity of such an objection.

Secondly, This objection seems to derive its whole force from such positions relating to the moral attributes of God, as make it necessary for us to suppose, either that he deals with all his creatures at present in an equally favourable manner, or, at least, that nothing shall be ultimately wanting to their happiness. Now the first supposition appears, upon the most transient view which we take of things, to be utterly false. There are differences of all degrees at present, in respect of all the good things which God has given us to enjoy ; and therefore may be in the best of all good things, revealed religion. And indeed, if it was otherwise in respect of revealed religion, one strong argument in its favour would be wanting, viz. its analogy with the course of nature. The moral attributes of God are to be deduced from observations made upon the course of nature. If therefore the tenor of revelation be agreeable to that of nature, it must be so to the moral attributes of God. But if any one supposes, in the second place, that notwithstanding present and apparent differences in the circumstances of God's creatures, there are no real and ultimate

ones ; at least, that the balance will ultimately be in favour of each individual finitely, or perhaps infinitely ; I answer, that this supposition is as agreeable to revelation as to natural reason ; that there are as probable evidences for it in the word of God, as in his works, there being ‘ no acceptance of persons with God, no difference between the jew and the gentile,’ according to the scriptures ; and that we may infer as strongly from the scriptures, that Christ will save all, as it can be inferred from philosophy, that all will be happy in any way ; both which positions I shall endeavour to establish hereafter, with the mutual illustrations and confirmations, which these glorious doctrines of natural and revealed religion afford to each other. And the gradual diffusion of the patriarchal, judaical, and christian revelations, compared with the prophecies relating to the future kingdom of Christ, and with the present circumstances of things, will afford great satisfaction and joy to every pious, benevolent person, who inquires into this subject. These considerations will incline him to believe, that the gospel, will sooner or later, be preached to ‘ every creature in heaven, in earth, under the earth,’ &c. and not only preached, but received, obeyed, and made the means of unspeakable happiness to them. And thus this objection will be removed not only in speculation, and according to reason, but in fact, from the present unhappy objectors ; and ‘ they will look on him whom they have pierced.’



Thirdly, Having shewn that a gradual and partial promulgation is not consistent with the supposition of a true revelation, we may farther affirm, that the particular time and manner, in which the several patriarchal, judaical, and christian revelations, have been published to the world, are even arguments in their favour. This subject has been well handled by various learned men, particularly Mr. Arch. Law, in his *Considerations on the state of the world, &c.* These gentlemen have shewn, that, *cæteris manentibus*, which is in these things always to be previously allowed, the dispensations recorded in the scriptures have been, as far as we can judge, perfectly suited to the states of the world at the times when these dispensations were made respectively, *i. e.* to the improvement of mankind in knowledge speculative and practical, to their wants, and to their ability to profit in moral accomplishments ; so that if we suppose either much more, or much less, light to have been afforded to mankind in a supernatural way (*cæteris manentibus* ; and particularly their voluntary powers over their affections and actions, or free-will in the practical sense, remaining the same) their advancement in moral perfection, in voluntary obedience to, and pure love of God, would probably have been less : which suitability of each revelation to the time when it was made, and to the production of the *maximum* of moral perfection, is an argument for the system of revelation, of the same kind with those

for the goodness of God, which are drawn from the mutual fitnesses of the finite and imperfect parts of the natural world to each other, and to the production of the *maximum*, or greatest possible quantity of happiness.

THE EXCLUSION OF ALL GREAT DEGREES OF ENTHUSIASM AND IMPOSTURE FROM THE CHARACTERS OF CHRIST, THE PROPHETS AND APOSTLES, PROVES THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY.

THAT Christ, the prophets and apostles, cannot be charged with any great degrees of enthusiasm or imposture, seems allowed by many unbelievers ; and is evident from the first view of their discourses and writings, and of history sacred and profane. We might say, that much more is evident. However, for the present, let us only suppose all great degrees of enthusiasm and imposture excluded, and inquire how far their divine mission may be inferred from that supposition.

First, then, If all great degrees of enthusiasm be excluded, Christ, the prophets and apostles, must know whether or no they were under the influence of the divine spirit, so as to prophecy, speak, and interpret languages, which they had never learnt, and work miracles. Indeed to suppose them not capable of distinguishing these powers in themselves and each other, is to charge them with downright madness.

Secondly, Since then they claimed these powers every where, as the seal of their commission from God ; if they had them not, *i. e.* if they had not divine authority, they must be impostors, and endeavour to deceive the world knowingly and deliberately. And this imposture, whether we considered the affront offered to God, or the injury done to mankind, or its duration, its audaciousness, &c. would be the deepest and blackest that has ever appeared in the world. It is therefore excluded by supposition ; and consequently, since a less degree will not account for a false claim to divine authority, we must allow, that Christ, the prophets and apostles, made a true one.

Thirdly, Let it be observed, that though cautious unbelievers do not venture to charge Christ, the prophets and apostles, either with gross enthusiasm, or abandoned imposture, in express terms ; yet they find themselves obliged to insinuate both in all their attacks upon revealed religion, which is, in effect, to acknowledge the truth of the present proposition ; for it is the same thing, as to acknowledge, that both the charge of gross enthusiasm, and that of abandoned imposture, are necessary to support the objections against revealed religion. Now, as neither charge, singly taken, can be maintained ; so both together are inconsistent. Gross enthusiasm does not admit that constant caution, and cool dispassionate cunning, which abandoned imposture supposes and requires in order to succeed.



THE RECEPTION WHICH CHRIST, HIS FORERUNNERS  
AND FOLLOWERS, WITH THEIR DOCTRINES, HAVE  
MET WITH IN ALL AGES IS AN ARGUMENT OF  
THEIR DIVINE AUTHORITY.

THIS evidence does, as it were, embrace all the others, and give a particular force to them. For it will be a strong confirmation of all the evidences for the jewish and christian religions, if we can shew, that the persons to whom they have been offered, have been influenced by them as much as there was reason to expect, admitting them to be true ; and far more than could be expected, on supposition that they were false. The most illustrious instance of this, is the victory which the christian miracles and doctrines, with the sufferings of our saviour, and his followers, gained over the whole powers, first, of the jewish state, and then of the Roman empire, in the primitive times. For here all ranks and kinds of men, princes, priests, jewish and heathen, philosophers, populace, with all their associated prejudices from custom and education, and all their corrupt passions and lusts, with all the external advantages of learning, power, riches, honour, and in short, with every thing but truth, endeavoured to suppress the progress that Christ's religion made every day in the world ; but were unable to do it. Yet still the evidence was but of a limited nature ; it required to be set forth, attested, and explained, by the

preacher, and to be attended to, and reflected upon, with some degree of impartiality, by the hearer : and therefore, though the progress of it was quick, and the effect general, yet they were not instantaneous and universal. However, it is very evident, that any fraud, or false pretence, must soon have yielded to so great an opposition so circumstanced.

The efficacy which the christian doctrine then had in reforming the lives of many thousands, is here to be considered as a principal branch of this argument, it being evidently the most difficult of all things, to convert men from vicious habits to virtuous ones, as every one may judge from what he feels in himself, as well as from what he sees in others ; and whatever does this, cannot, as it seems to me, but come from God.

The false religions, and various corruptions of the true, which have from time to time appeared in the world, have been enabled to do this in the imperfect manner in which they have done it, merely, as it seems to me, from that mixture of important truths, and good motives, which they have borrowed from real revelations, patriarchal, judaical, and christian.

In like manner as the propagation of christianity, upon its first appearance in the world, evinces its divine original, so does the progress it has since made, and the reception which it meets with at present, amongst the several ranks and orders of men. The detail of this would run out to a great length. It may, however, be



of some use, just to observe, that notwithstanding the great prevalence of infidelity in the present times, it is seldom found to consist with an accurate knowledge of ancient history, sacred and profane, and never with an exalted piety and devotion to God.

And it is as peculiar for the credit of christianity that it should now be supported by the learned, as that it was first propagated by the unlearned ; and an incontestible evidence for it, as appears to me, that it has been universally embraced by all eminently pious persons, to whom it has been made known in a proper manner.

The analogous observations may be made upon the reception which the jewish religion met with both from the jews themselves, and from the neighbouring nations. It seems impossible for Moses to have delivered the jews from their oppression in Egypt, and afterwards to have subjected them to his laws, for Joshua to have conquered Canaan, for the religion to have subsisted in the succeeding times of the judges and kings, for the priests and prophets to have maintained their authority, for the people to have returned after their captivity, with their religion in an uncorrupted state, and to have supported it and themselves against the kings of Syria and Egypt, and power of the Romans, and to remain at this day a separate people dispersed all over the world, according to the pro-



phesies, unless the miraculous part of the history of the Old Testament be allowed to be true, as well as the others.

THE RECEPTION WHICH FALSE RELIGIONS HAVE MET WITH IN THE WORLD, ARE ARGUMENTS OF THE TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN.

I WILL here make a few short remarks,

First, Upon the polytheistical, idolatrous religions of the ancient world.

Secondly, Upon the religious institutions of Zoroaster.

Thirdly, Upon the imposture of Mahomet.

Fourthly, Upon the enthusiastical sects, which have appeared from time to time amongst christians.

All these seem to have met with such success, as might be expected from the mixture of truth and falsehood in them, compared with the then circumstances of things. They are therefore indirect evidences for the truth of the christian religion, since this has met with such success, as cannot be reconciled to the circumstances of things, unless we suppose it true.

And, First, The ancient pagan religions seem evidently to be the degenerated offspring of the patriarchal revelations; and so far to have been true, as they taught a God, a providence, a future state, supernatural communications made to particular persons, especially in the in-

fancy of the world, the present corruption of man, and his deviation from a pure and perfect way, the hopes of a pardon, a mediatorial power, the duties of sacrifice, prayer, and praise, and the virtues of prudence, temperance, justice, and fortitude. They were false, as they mixed and polluted these important truths with numberless fables, superstitions and impieties. That degree of truth, and moral excellence, which remained in them, was a principal cause of their success, and easy propagation, among the people ; for their moral sense would direct them to approve and receive what was fit and useful. And, had the people of those times penetrated sufficiently into the powers of the human mind, they might have concluded, that religious truths could not be of human invention. However, as the impressions, which the historical and prophetic evidences for the patriarchal revelation had made upon mankind, were not yet obliterated ; they believed, upon the authority of tradition, that all important knowledge, especially in sacred matters, was of divine original.

As to the miracles said to be wrought upon certain occasions in pagan nations, we may make these two remarks : First, That the evidence of these is far inferiour to that for the jewish and christian miracles ; so that these may be true, though those be false. Secondly, That we are not sufficiently informed of the ways of providence, to infer that God did not permit, or

cause, some miracles to be wrought, even in times and places, where great corruption prevailed. Divine communications and miracles were probably most common soon after the flood, in the infancy of mankind : afterwards, as they advanced towards adult age, these supernatural interpositions grew more rare (unless upon singular occasions, as upon the publication of the law by Moses, and of the gospel by Christ ; at which times, many and great miracles succeeded each other at short intervals, in order to command awe, attention, and belief) ; and it may be, that they ceased in the pagan world for some ages before Christ : or it may be otherwise ; and that, in rare and extraordinary cases, the hand of God appeared in a miraculous manner. Analogy favours the last opinion, as it seems to me ; which also appears to be more countenanced by history, than the contrary one ; and yet the pretences to miracles amongst the pagans were undoubtedly false, in the general.

I come, in the second place, to consider the religious institutions of Zoroaster. We have not so full and authentick an history of these, as to compare them properly with the jewish or christian revelations. If we suppose, that Zoroaster and Hystaspes set up the worship of one God, in a simple manner, teaching and inculcating the practice of virtue at the same time, this religion may be said to have considerable moral evidence in its favour. If, farther, we suppose



it to be in part derived, either from the descendants of Abraham by Keturah, called Brachmans from him, or from that knowledge of the true God, which the ten tribes, and the jews, had then communicated to that part of the world, it will become an evidence for the jewish religion.

Thirdly, The religion of Mahomet allows and pre-supposes the truth of the jewish and christian. Its rapid propagation was owing chiefly to the mixture of political interests. That part of its doctrines, which is good, is manifestly taken from the scriptures; and this contributed to its success. However, a comparison of mahometism with christianity, in the several particulars of each, seems to shew, that whenever a strict examination is made into the history of mahometism by its professors, the falsehood of it will quickly be made evident to them. It could not stand such a trial, as christianity has, since the revival of learning in these western parts.

It seems easy to apply what has been delivered in the three last paragraphs to the analogous particulars of the religion of Confucius, and of other religions found in the East and West Indies, as far as their histories are sufficiently full and authentick for that purpose.

Lastly, One may make the following remarks, with respect to the several enthusiastick sects, that arise from time to time amongst christians.

First, That their pretences to miracles and prophecies have, in general, been detected and exposed, after some examination and inquiry ; unless the sect has begun to decline from other causes, before a strict examination became necessary.

Secondly, That their pretended miracles were not of that evident kind, nor done in the same open manner, &c. as the jewish and christian miracles.

Thirdly, That these pretended miracles have not produced lasting effects upon the minds of men, like the jewish and christian. Now, though a religion may succeed for a time without true miracles, yet it seems hard to believe, that any should fail with them.

Fourthly, The success of sects has, in general, been owing to their making greater pretences to purity, and gospel perfection, than established churches, and to their both teaching and practising some necessary duties, which established churches have too much neglected in the corrupted state of christianity. And in this light they have been true in part, and have done the most important service to the world. Every sect of christians has magnified some great truth, not above its real value, but above the value which other sects have set upon it ; and by this means each important religious truth has had the advantage of being set in a full light by some party or other, though too much neglected by the rest. And the true catholick



church and communion of saints unite all these sects, by taking what is right from each, and leaving the errors, falsehoods, and corruptions of each to combat and destroy one another.

And it may be, that mankind will be able in future generations to see, how every other sect, and pretence to revelation, besides those of enthusiastick christians, in whatever age or country it has appeared, has been, all other things remaining the same, suited in the best possible manner, both to particular and general purposes ; and that each has prepared the way, in its proper place, for that more complete state predicted in the scriptures under the titles of ' the kingdom of heaven,' and ' of righteousness, of the New Jerusalem,' &c. Even infidelity, atheism, and scepticism, have their use. The vessels of wrath are still vessels belonging to the Maker and Lord of all things, and answering his infinitely beneficent purposes. ' Offences must come,' though ' woe be to those by whom they come !' Each sect, and pretence, and objection, has given, or will give, way in its time. The true and pure religion of Christ alone grows more evident and powerful from every attack that is made upon it, and converts the bitterness and poison of its adversaries into nourishment for itself, and an universal remedy for the pains and sorrows of a miserable, degenerate world.